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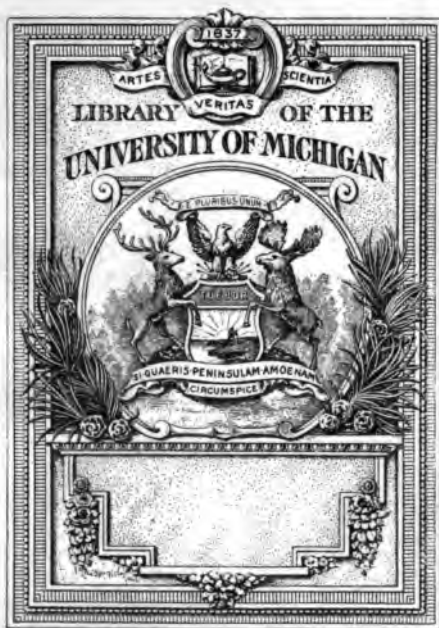
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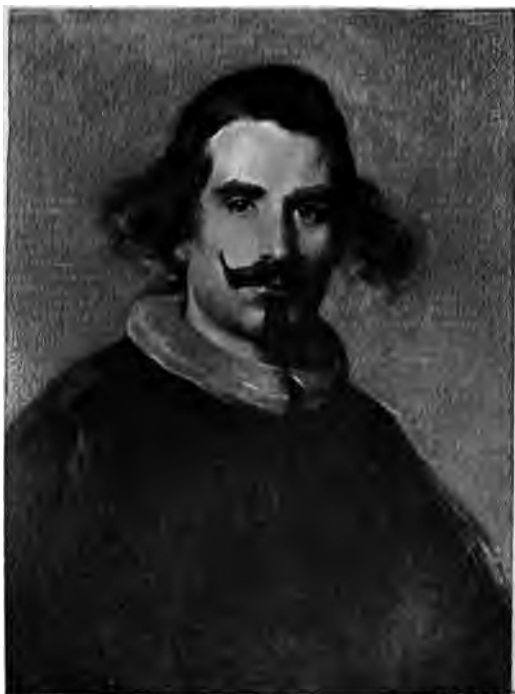
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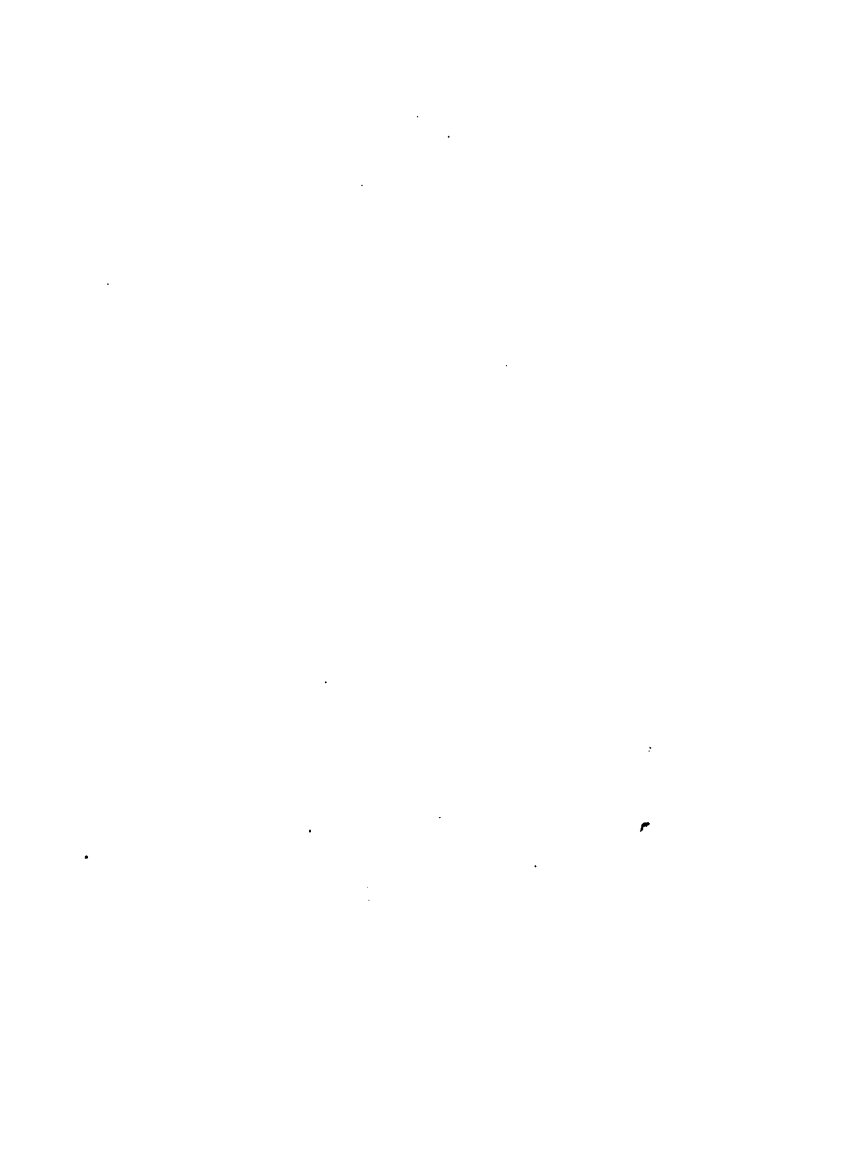
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VELASQUEZ

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

Seville at the birth of Velasquez—The artist's early days—His sojourn with Herrera—He is transferred to Pacheco—Pacheco's peculiar qualifications for training him—Velasquez's marriage—His earliest works—The "Water Carrier"—The *Bodegones* and sacred subjects.

IN the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth century Seville was in many respects the most important city in the Peninsula. Hers was the great mart where twice each year the sustenance of Spain was landed. Her wharves received the whole of the wealth which poured in from the New World; her galleons, as they sailed up the Guadalquivir, were eagerly looked for by the rest of Spain and of Europe; by her was supplied two-thirds of the currency of the Peninsula. Truly did Mercado call her "the capital of all the merchants in the world."

But Seville was no mere commercial centre.

The age of which we are speaking saw the artistic influence of Italy in its full force, and in no town was this influence more profoundly felt than in the capital of Andalusia, both in manners and literature. Rome herself was not more affected by the culture and refinement of Greece, than were the art and literature of Spain coloured and ennobled by Italian genius. With all this, however, the Moorish occupation had left its indelible mark upon Seville, to such a degree that to this day a visitor feels as though he had left Europe behind him and had entered some Oriental city. The beautiful Moorish tower on the north-east corner of the cathedral, the largest in Spain, the courtyards arcaded with marble pillars and decorated with coloured tiles and old pictures, the fountains shooting their crystal waters into the clear southern air, the narrow, awning-covered streets of the Jewish quarter where Murillo was born—in which one can walk in the middle of the road and touch the houses on either side with one's outstretched hands—the snatches of Arabian music with which the popular melodies abound, the dances which on some occasions still survive in the Church services—all these features transport the traveller to the scenery and surroundings of some Eastern tale.

In this city of artistic and commercial magnificence, on the 5th of June, 1599, was born Diego Rodriguez de Silva, who is known to fame under his mother's patronymic Velasquez. That very year saw also the birth of Van Dyck.

The family of De Silva sprang from an ancient Portuguese stock, and had migrated to Seville two generations before the artist's birth. It may well be that he chose to bear his mother's name on account of its Sevillian origin. The name Diego Velasquez, indeed, had been famous for many generations—among the bearers of it being one of the Cistercian founders of the Order of Calatrava, of whom mention is made in the *Acta Sanctorum*. Velasquez was also the name of the conqueror and first governor of Cuba. The artist's Christian name, Diego, is probably the same as Jago, or James, in Latin Didacus, a form which he used in signing some of his pictures. Of his boyish days no such anecdotes as we possess of so many other artists have come down to us. His parents seem to have been devout people, who nurtured their son on what has been styled "the milk of the fear of the Lord." At an early age he was sent to a grammar school, where he learnt Latin, and

became fairly proficient in other languages ; but the bent of his genius very soon declared itself, and his father, recognising from unmistakable signs what the boy's career was likely to be, and having, as we are told, a lofty idea of his gifts, consented to his leaving school and devoting himself entirely to his art. From that day all Diego's other studies ceased. No longer was he obliged to draw and paint surreptitiously, or to use his copybooks as sketch-books, as had been his wont. His father's decision was an honourable one. The family means were ample ; there was therefore no question of bread-making in the matter. And yet De Silva, in allowing his son to follow his bent, showed himself to be above the snobbishness which regards the profession of an artist as unbecoming a gentleman's birth—a sentiment by no means unknown to the parents of some other artistic geniuses.

Now arose the question as to the master under whom Diego was to study. For the solution of this question there must have been an *embarras de richesse* in Seville at that period, and, no doubt, the various pros and cons were fully discussed before choice was made of Francisco de Herrera, then in the very zenith of his extraordinary powers. To him

Diego was sent—a finely strung, sensitive boy of twelve; and it is surely not surprising to hear that the connection between the two was short-lived. The energetic and eccentric genius of Herrera, however much it may delight us when it is exhibited on his canvas, was scarcely likely to make a boy like Diego happy. His temper and his methods were alike calculated to frighten a child. He was a misanthropist who had passed his education in solitude. His whole soul was set in open rebellion against the received style and views of Spanish art, and he was bent upon breaking through the narrow theories which trammelled it.

In his wild eccentricity he is said to have drawn with charred reeds and painted with a house-painter's brush. On one occasion he ordered the housemaid to prepare his canvas. She was to daub it with her besoms and brooms, after which the artist "worked in his figures and draperies." His housemaid's services were required because he had been deserted by his pupils, a thing which not infrequently occurred. Indeed, if we are to believe Palomino, his children fled from the paternal roof owing to their father's harshness. No doubt young Velasquez found a year quite long enough to

spend with this domestic firework, and the calmer atmosphere of Pacheco's studio, to which he was now transferred, must have been a delightful contrast.

Francisco Pacheco had lately returned from a journey which was destined to have important results for him, when Velasquez became his pupil. In 1611 he had paid a visit to the Court, where he had been able to study in the originals the Italian pictures whose copies he had so long admired. In the Escorial, in the studios of Carducho and El Greco, he imbibed ideas which coloured all his later work. He was essentially a man of rule and principle, with a strong, resolute, determined will, and an infinite capacity for taking pains coupled with so scanty an allowance of creative power as to make him a witness to the absurdity of the modern definition of genius. He who had been a fellow-pupil of Herrera, was the strenuous defender of the decaying system which Herrera detested, not, however, without a keen suspicion that it was doomed. He returned to Seville with ideas greatly enlarged, with a freer brush, a more robust and vigorous manner, and a quickened fancy. He now opened a school of painting in which Velasquez became a pupil during the next five years.

Many writers have expressed surprise that Velasquez could have reconciled himself to this long sojourn with his new master. But, putting aside the probability that at first at least he had no choice but to remain where his father had put him, there is no doubt that Pacheco, with all his limitations, was able to help the boy in many ways. To begin with he was a scholar and a man of refinement, who had cultivated his mind to the utmost. He was a great deal more than a mere artist of the second rank. He was a poet, an archæologist, and an author. His studies had created in him an ideal of art which his defective genius prevented his putting into execution. His greatness consisted in being able to analyse and criticise what he could not have produced. His weakness lay in his inability to realise that he could not produce it. The strong and great aspects of his nature were, therefore, precisely fitted for training one whose genius transcended his own. Thus, even when the relief of being taught by a sane and kindly man had outworn its novelty, there remained for Velasquez the supreme advantage of a severe and methodical training which, let people say what they will, is as essential for the guidance of genius as of the most ordinary talent. Thus the young

Diego was taught that "drawing is the life and soul of painting," that art has really no other difficulty, and that even giants (or geniuses) have in this their lifelong struggle, one in which they can never for a moment lay aside their arms.

Pacheco's books give us in the utmost detail the principles which governed him. Thus we may infer with accuracy the methods which he adopted in training Velasquez, down even to the composition of the pigments and other minutiae of the art. And yet with all this, so little of a pedant was Pacheco that we find him acknowledging at the end of his long work that "what is here said . . . by no means claims to tie down to these laws and ways those who are trying to reach the summit of the art," adding that he has no wish "to impose burdens and yokes upon good heads," and that there may be "other methods possibly easier and better." Surely this was not the man in whose studio the genius of Velasquez was likely to become "cribbed, cabined, and confined." And yet some writers, in their wonder at his forbearance, have suggested that during the five years he spent in what Palomino calls "this golden prison of art," he was only serving for his Rachel; for certain it is that, in 1618, he

became Pacheco's son-in-law. The wedding took place on April 23rd, 1618, in the church of St. Michael, in Seville, the bride's name being Juana de Miranda. She seems to have been Pacheco's only daughter. This marriage, which in England would be thought an imprudently early one, seeing that the bridegroom wanted nearly two months of his nineteenth birthday, met with Pacheco's full approval. He writes : "After five years of education and training I married him [Velasquez] to my daughter, induced by his youth, integrity, and good qualities and the prospect of his great natural genius."

The portrait of his wife by the artist, as it hangs in the Prado, shows us a sensible, clear-cut profile, the deep-set eyes and straight nose telling of her artistic parentage. The lips and contour of the mouth denote a gentle nature which the firmly set lips forbid us to mistake for mere softness. With a wife such as she clearly was, and with the exceptional opportunity which, as her father's pupil, he must have had of knowing her intimately, with every prospect of domestic happiness, though little dreaming of the greatness he was destined to attain, Velasquez entered upon the first stage of his career.

In these his early days he confined himself to the production of Bodegones (or what may be called kitchen pieces) and of sacred subjects; and this he did appropriately enough for while the former class appealed at the time to Andalusian taste, the intensely Catholic atmosphere of Seville naturally inspired an artist to paint those mysteries which were in everyone's mind. And certainly no apology needed for a man who applies the early fruits of his genius to the sublimest subjects.

The work which claims the proud distinction of being the first production of the artist's unaided brush is the well-known "Water-carrier of Seville." Though ranking with the Bodegones, this picture is in some respects more attractive than others of its class, inasmuch as the human element so entirely predominates. Many of the Bodegones represent interiors and still life with such scrupulous accuracy that a full description of them sounds like nothing so much as an extract from an auctioneer's sale-catalogue. "The Water-carrier," on the other hand, contains on its small space three human figures. Velasquez himself was evidently well pleased with it, for he took it with him when summoned to Court, and it found a place in one of the rooms of the Buen Retiro, where it

was more admired than any other of his works of the same class. The eminent authority Mengs wrote of it in terms of glowing eulogy, and it soon became more widely known by means of the graver's art. During his flight from Madrid, in 1813, King Joseph Bonaparte attempted to carry it away, but it was rescued, and afterwards presented, with other pictures, to the Duke of Wellington by Ferdinand VII. The work has thus found a home in Apsley House, far away from the dangers of revolution and war. The artist has represented one of the water-vendors who used to supply the houses of Seville, standing before a wooden table, his left hand resting upon one of the huge round earthenware vessels containing the refreshing beverage so precious to the thirsty citizens during the summer months. His right hand holds a chalice-shaped glass of clear water, which he is presenting to a boy, whose companion is drinking from a two-handled earthen mug, in the background. On the bare table stands a double-handled vase or *ampulla*, probably intended to hold the reserve water for the use of the household.

The water-carrier himself is evidently a portrait—not merely a type. The long, straight, refined nose, almost on the same plane with the

ample forehead; the prominent cheek-bones imparting a look of asceticism to the face; the air of self-abnegation, of self-conquest, and of the peace thereby obtained; the mouth with its unmistakable expression of gentleness which the beard scarcely hides—all these features, combined with the upright, military figure and the aristocratic presence, remind one irresistibly of the portraits of St. Ignatius. And yet, curiously enough, Velasquez was not painting his water-carrier from a Spanish model, but from a Corsican who had joined the guild of *Aguadores*, or “waterers” of Seville.

Even this—his first work—might have shown anyone with a taste for prophecy that Velasquez would one day be known as a portrait-painter. But this branch of art, for which Pacheco says a man is born, not trained, was only adopted by Velasquez many years later. For work contemporary with “The Water-carrier of Seville” we must turn to the famous “Adoration of the Magi,” so familiar to visitors to the Prado, and “The Shepherds at Bethlehem,” which hangs in our National Gallery.

Another early picture of the Bodegones class ought not to be passed over. It is known under the name of the “Two Peasants,” and

it is in the collection of the late Sir Francis Cook, of Richmond. It is an exquisite specimen of its class. A woman seated before a fire is busy cooking an omelette in an earthen pan. On her left stands a boy with a melon under his arm. He is offering the woman a wine-flask. In the foreground of the picture are various kitchen utensils familiar to every housekeeper, which the Sevillians of that age loved to see depicted upon canvas.

The controversy as to "the subject in art" still rages, nor can we attempt even to set it forth at the end of a chapter. For our part we cannot see that it degrades an artist to paint even homely things as he sees them, though there are doubtless many painters who, while they would be the first to laugh at the adulation which should compare them with Velasquez, would none the less resent as an outrage the suggestion that they should apply themselves to depicting a class of subjects which, as treated by that great master, have nevertheless added dignity and lustre to the noblest galleries in the world.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION TO COURT

Velasquez visits Madrid—Paints a portrait of Gongora—He returns to Seville—Is summoned to Court—Entertained by Fonseca—Philip IV.—Spain during his reign—Philip's character and tastes—His love of art—His patronage of Velasquez.

WHEN he attained the age of twenty-three Velasquez felt that he had nothing more to learn in Seville, and like all ambitious souls was seized with the desire to go further afield and enlarge his experiences by penetrating deeper into the alluring spheres of the world of art, as exemplified by the great Castilian painters.

The month of April, 1622, saw him set out for Madrid in company with his servant only, little dreaming that he was even then on the road to his future triumphs.

At the period under present notice Madrid was at the zenith of its glory—a true centre of genius and magnificence, entitling it to be regarded as the very Mecca of all Spanish devotees of art.

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Fortunately for Velasquez his father-in-law Pacheco was able to furnish him with valuable introductions, among others to Don Luis and Don Melchor del Alcázar, and even to Don Juan Fonseca himself—an art patron of high reputation and immense influence, whose position at the Court of Philip IV. was the means of procuring for the young artist admission to the royal galleries. Fonseca even went so far as to suggest that the King should commission Velasquez to paint his portrait.

This proposition, however, remained for the present unrealised, the youthful Sovereign being apparently too much absorbed by the novelty and pleasures of monarchy to care to spend long hours posing before an artist.

Later, when the bright promise of early days had faded into sombre tints, and melancholy, the Death's-head at so many of his feasts, had become too constant a companion, the King was glad enough to while away the tedium of overshadowing *ennui* by giving sittings to the then consummate painter Velasquez.

But we anticipate. The first visit to Madrid ended, after a certain number of months spent by the artist in study at the Prado and Escorial, and in the painting of a portrait of Gongora, the poet, in accordance with the desire of

Pacheco. This picture is much more suggestive of a member of the Holy Office (of the Inquisition) than of the much-lauded Bard of Andalusia ; and the severe face of the bald-headed ecclesiastic looking out from its frame in the Queen of Spain's Gallery to-day, certainly appears to have little in common with Lyre or Laurel Wreath. Except for this portrait, this first pilgrimage of Velasquez to the Spanish capital seems to have resulted in nothing more than an extended area of knowledge and for his eyes a plenteous feast of art treasures—for the notice of a courtier and of some city magnates, gratifying as it no doubt was, can scarcely count as an important event in his career.

But just as events destined to make or mar a whole future frequently enter life without so much as a premonitory "knock at the door" from Fate, so it fell out in the case of Velasquez. An unknown suppliant at the shrine of art in 1622, he left it only to be recalled to set his foot on the first rung of the ladder leading to fame and fortune.

After his *protégé* had bid farewell to Madrid, Fonseca, far from consigning him to oblivion, exerted himself to such purpose on his behalf, as to be rewarded by the enlistment in the in-

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terests of Velasquez of none other than the King's Prime Minister, Count Olivares, with the result that the artist speedily received a letter summoning him to Court, together with the sum of fifty ducats to defray expenses.

It need hardly be said that the command was no sooner issued than it was obeyed ; and on this occasion the artist did not travel in the company of his servant only (a mulatto lad, who subsequently became a painter of merit, Juan Pareja), but was accompanied by Pacheco, who could not deny himself the pleasure of sharing in the success prophesied by circumstances for his pupil and son-in-law, and of basking in the sunshine of reflected glory.

In March, 1623, the three travellers arrived at the capital, and were installed as the guests of Fonseca, whose first gracious act was to order a portrait of himself to be painted by Velasquez. The very evening it was finished the picture was conveyed to the Palace of the Cardinal Infant, and before the expiration of sixty seconds it had been the cynosure of eyes no less illustrious than those of the King, the Cardinal Infant, and Don Carlos, to say nothing of a goodly muster of grandees.

“There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.” And

never were these immortal words more applicable than in the case of Velasquez.

But what of the Sovereign whose patronage he so faithfully requited during the long years of his splendid career?

At the time that Velasquez took up the new thread of his life at Madrid, Philip IV. had attained only the nineteenth year of his age, and was merely on the threshold of a reign extending over nearly half a century.

To the unbiassed student of history the ornate, grandiloquent allusions to His Majesty on the part of his contemporaries appear incongruous, to say the least, in their overloaded fawning flattery—and the climax is reached in the florid poem composed by Pacheco in commemoration of the first celebrated portrait of the royal features executed by Velasquez.

From the impartial standpoint of the present, Philip IV. was far from being the hero that his flatterers represent him. For those who have the welfare of the European system sufficiently at heart to feel concern for the dead past, there can be little beyond regret aroused by the study of Spanish policy during those forty-four years of a reign chiefly remarkable for misrule, commercial decline, and depression (with all its attendant evils) in the outlying

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provinces and colonies; the whole scheme being coloured by sanguinary warfare, concluding in the ignominious "Peace of the Pyrenees."

In justice to Philip IV. the fact must not be overlooked that he succeeded to a throne already gravely enfeebled by the hampering masterfulness of his predecessors. Ambition, hand-in-hand with ability of much smaller proportions, and with ill-fortune following in its wake, had gone far towards undermining the foundations of what had once been the most splendid empire in the world. It was therefore matter for slight wonder if the young King found the administration of his realm to be a Herculean task beyond his powers of achievement.

Even a Ferdinand, backed up by ministerial ability equal to that of a Ximenes, might have experienced some embarrassment at such a prospect; and if so, what must have been the feelings of a man of the mental and moral calibre of the fourth Philip? A futile attempt at constitutional renovation, made only to be relinquished, was not a very promising contribution to the political aggrandisement of the nation; and after *the first year* of his reign we hear no more of similar endeavours. The very magnitude of his responsibility, coupled with

or connoisseur ; his efforts as author, poet, musician and painter marking him out on the background of history as a man of extraordinary versatility and exceptional gifts. To this day, the Royal Library at Madrid contains volumes of his translations from the Italian ; and an eminent critic of his own era (Pellicer de Salas) extolled the talents of "His Majesty" in terms which rang true with sincerity.

Incognito Philip IV. loved to break a lance with the knights of the dramatic muse, or "take the boards" when the whim seized him ; while, above all, Art ranked in the foremost place from first to last, and remained his *Liege Lady* even when dividing the honours with Literature.

Under the tuition of Juan Bautista (the Dominican) he developed into an artist worthy to take rank as "the best of the House of Austria," multiplying trophies of his skill in pen-and-ink, sketching, and oil-painting. For Velasquez it augured well indeed to enter the service of a monarch whose predilections made him so ready to "hold out the golden sceptre" to genius, the latter prerogative obtaining for the artist courtly dignities and substantial emoluments, besides the advantage of foreign travel in execution of the royal behests.

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from the burden of his position behind the doors of theatres, on the Grand Tier at bull fights, and in art studios, when not engaged in less reputable enjoyment. And while rebellion and discord increased, and the fate of his empire trembled in the balance, the King acted in farces and comedies ; gave directions for beautifying his gardens or galleries, and was ready, in short, to do *anything* but “ make the Constitution.”

Although Philip cannot claim admiration as a ruler, he is worthy of all the praise he has received for his artistic and literary abilities. Indeed, his patronage of Art and Letters, his whole attitude towards the cultivation of a sense of the beautiful, well-nigh tempt us to catalogue him as a Spanish impersonation of Lorenzo “ Il Magnifico.” Throughout his reign the stage of Castile was in the heyday of its renown ; and Calderon—styled “ the Shakespeare of Spain ”—and Francesco de Roxas the poet, received the meed of royal approbation, and this not in words only, for both were rewarded by the Cross of Santiago. Within the Palace itself the atmosphere was redolent of Art and Literature, while its precincts fairly scintillated with clusters of brilliant men.

Moreover, the King was no mere dilettante

or connoisseur ; his efforts as author, poet, musician and painter marking him out on the background of history as a man of extraordinary versatility and exceptional gifts. To this day, the Royal Library at Madrid contains volumes of his translations from the Italian ; and an eminent critic of his own era (Pellicer de Salas) extolled the talents of "His Majesty" in terms which rang true with sincerity.

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Had all the interest and earnestness which the King devoted to art and culture been focussed upon affairs of State the annals of his reign would have been different, and the historian of Spain would have had a happier story to tell. As it is, we must at least give credit where it is due. It is a royal privilege to recognise genius, and this Philip undoubtedly did when occasion offered. The appearance of Rubens in Spain was an event "marked with a white stone," the enthusiasm of Philip venting itself in a truly regal bestowal of rewards of merit. In forthcoming pages something will be said about the meeting between the great Flemish painter and Spain's first impressionist, including Rubens' incitement of Velasquez to Italian travel; but for the present we must see to how it fared with the subject of this biography after the exhibition of his picture on that memorable day in the Palace of the Cardinal Infant, when, through the agency of Fonseca, he paid his second visit to Madrid. This event may justly be estimated as the crucial point in the artist's career, and, happily for him, it resulted in a recognition of his genius which undoubtedly paved the way to future glory. Philip forthwith took him into his service at a salary of twenty ducats a

month, Velasquez being ordered to set to work upon a portrait of the Infant Don Fernando.

The King, however, became impatient to submit his own features to the artist, and supplemented the first commission by a second (to be undertaken without delay), namely, a large equestrian picture of himself.

CHAPTER III

EARLY PORTRAITS

Prince Charles of England visits Madrid—His portrait by Velasquez—The equestrian portrait of Philip IV.—The Artist obtains the monopoly of painting the royal features—Pacheco's exultation and Herrera's resentment—The question of Herrera's influence—The Prado portrait of Philip—"Los Barrachos"—The Artist as apostle of Impressionism—The competition picture, "The Expulsion of the Moriscos."

WHILST Velasquez was engaged upon his first royal order there arrived at the Spanish Court Prince Charles of England, attended by Buckingham, intent on a matrimonial mission, having the Infanta for its object.

Doubtless the artist found the endless round of gaieties (alternating with negotiations), which occupied the King at this juncture, somewhat trying and untimely. Be this as it may, it is certain that many interruptions occurred in the sittings, such gaps being widened into a lengthy hindrance owing to the

royal suitor's undue detention at Court the while Olivares played a diplomatic game of "fast and loose," to gain time in the interests of his own policy in connection with the affair.

After the expiration of five months the Prince and his "Squire" succeeded in sounding the depths, or the shallows, of the motives at work regarding the royal suit, and taking the measure of the situation, withdrew from the Castilian Court, Prince Charles turning his steps in the direction of pastures new, but not before making repayment *in kind*, for the insincerity meted out to him, in the form of a gift, emblematical of Constancy, which he presented to the Infanta on his departure.

And thus was an intriguing State policy hoist with its own petard!

Although Prince Charles did not gain a bride, the five months he spent amidst the splendours of Madrid were not by any means profitless; the art of the Spanish capital was in itself a radiant dream, and an education for the eye second only to that afforded by Rome.

The lucky star of Velasquez was as usual in the ascendant. Far from being left to hide his light under a bushel during the royal visit, the artist was brought before the notice of Prince Charles, and notwithstanding the dis-

tractions of surroundings—gorgeous as an extract from the pages of *The Arabian Nights*—another royal portrait was added to the works of the artist.

Whether this picture was ever completed remains doubtful, to say the least, and its fate is more or less shrouded in obscurity. In 1847 Mr. John Snare exhibited a picture purporting to be the original of Velasquez's "Charles" (bought at a sale in the country for an absurdly small sum) and, according to Mr. Snare's theory, synonymous with the portrait catalogued as a Velasquez in Earl Fife's collection in 1809. But amongst art savants and experts there still exists a division in the camp; and the fact of the work in question being more than three parts finished, diminishes the likelihood of its identity with the "bosquexo"¹ of the Prince alluded to by Pacheco. No more light on the subject is forthcoming, and the picture appears in consequence likely to continue "a doubtful quantity." We may add, that Sir W. Stirling Maxwell believes it to have been finally exported to America and there sold.

But "who shall decide when doctors disagree?"

In August, 1623, the completion of the eques-

¹ A term for anything unfinished.

trian portrait of Philip, so long in hand, was at last accomplished; and exhibited in the chief public thoroughfare in the city, amidst a perfect furore of admiration from a vast throng of the artist's proud compatriots. His work was greeted by odes and eulogies—the enthusiasm of the city being outdone if possible by the Court. The King's naturally impassive temperament, roused by a touch from the magic wand of Art, blazed up in a glow of gratification; the rose-coloured light of his favour enveloped the person of Velasquez, and the artist found himself raised to the very pinnacle of Fame. He was rewarded by the royal ratification of his position at Court, the sum of three hundred ducats was bestowed upon him, together with the monopoly of pourtraying the countenance of Philip IV. for the future. Twice only (in the case of Rubens and of Crayer) did the King deviate from his resolve to sit to none other than his favourite artist.

Pacheco was jubilant at the triumph of his son-in-law and pupil, now Painter-in-Ordinary to His Majesty; but the harmony of approval was broken by “the growl” of resentment which issued from Herrera's studio, when he saw the glory of Velasquez's success reflected like an aureole round the head of *Pacheco*,

who, in open triumph, attributed to himself what, in Herrera's view, should have belonged to him. For was it not he—Herrera—who had influenced and directed the young artist's genius? To whom but him did Velasquez owe his characteristic genre? And who but Herrera could have stamped impressionism so indelibly on the plasticity of early youth? Then, too, Herrera could point to the similarity in the colouring of master and pupil in support of his claim. Certainly both Herrera and, later on, Velasquez are characterised by the same vigour of touch, the same bold relief—so instinct with life and movement—the same lights and shadows, the same sombre, and yet simple, strength of tone. Still, Herrera's view was, very naturally, onesided, and no final opinion should be formed, no dogmatic utterance made, without taking the other side into consideration.

In the first place the "freedom" which characterised Herrera had, long before, been seen in the work of El Greco, and in the very year that Velasquez became his pupil, Pacheco had paid a visit—with his eyes open—to El Greco's studio. That visit, as we know, influenced Pacheco's own method. Why, then, are we to be so sure that it did not influence his teaching? And if in five years Pacheco

could not instil into his pupil's mind what he had lately acquired, how is it that Herrera, in his short and stormy twelvemonth, was able to mould Velasquez's art to his own pattern?

But the fact is that it was only long after his years of tuition, whether under Herrera or Pacheco, that Velasquez adopted that style to which the adherents of the Herrera view point in support of their claim. His early manner shows nothing at all resembling that of Herrera. On the contrary, his fidelity to his models—always remarkable—is at this period close even to hardness; his drawing is cool, restrained, dainty—in a word, the very antipodes of Herrera's dashing, headlong, impetuous manner. It was not until Velasquez was settled at Madrid that his pictures began gradually to assume the "second manner" of which freedom of brush was a characteristic.

After the exhibition of the King's portrait, Velasquez received the royal command to remove his home from Seville to the capital, at the same time being presented with a sum of three hundred ducats to meet his expenses. Three years later he was accorded rooms in the Treasury, to the east of the Alcazar (worth quite two hundred ducats to him, in addition to his salary). Besides this he had his private

dwelling in the city. Here was genius in a golden setting and no mistake !

The famous picture itself—Velasquez's "Open Sesame" to position and fame—apparently exists no longer. It is supposed to have perished along with other treasures in a fire at the Palace, of later date.

But, though this picture has disappeared, leaving no trace, another portrait of Philip IV., now in the Museum of the Prado, conveys a very adequate idea of that first effort of Velasquez's genius, which so delighted his royal patron. The picture in the Prado represents Philip in dark armour, with a Spanish plumed hat on his head, the crimson scarf flowing out in the breeze from over his shoulders relieving the more sombre tints of his armour with a splash of rich colour. He is mounted on a splendid bay (a typical Andalusian), rejoicing in a luxuriance of mane and tail which appears almost exaggerated to British eyes, and more suggestive of an ornamental circus steed than of a conventional charger.

But Velasquez, familiar with the reality, was here as elsewhere true to life, when he painted a horse otherwise than according to the taste prevalent in an English stable. And a replica of Philip's prancing steed may be seen in certain

parts of Spain by any traveller to the present day.

Whether or no the biographies of the King do him full justice may be open to question. But there is not much room for doubt as to his good fortune in the matter of portraiture. His face is more familiar to us than are the details of his history. The hand of Velasquez has immortalised no raven-haired, dusky Spaniard; conversance with the galleries of Europe familiarises us with a pale, oval-faced, sleepy-eyed, apathetic-looking man, chiefly distinguishable by the long-twirled-out moustaches of his full-lipped mouth, and by his square, massive chin.

In the equestrian picture just described the artist's manipulation of his colours has produced a perfect rendering of that fine, delicate skin-texture, characteristic of youth and health, while the King's habitual languor of expression and somewhat bored lethargy of air and bearing are lightened by the exhilaration of his ride, together with a proud consciousness of his mastery over the prancing, spirited mount, so thoroughly in hand under the finest horseman of his day.

The appearance (about the same date) of Velasquez's "Los Borrachos," or "The Topers," gave ample evidence that the power-

ful individuality of his style had in nowise diminished through the fact of his having become a Court painter.

To the end of the chapter he remained the exponent of the realistic sentiment in nature, rather than of the ideal.

Moreover, according to the "Gospel of Impressionism," the painter's aim is to represent nature as she appears to the eye ; as a vast aggregate encompassed by the surrounding "ocean" of æther, and toned by the harmonies or discords of existent actuality, and not as a set of isolated units demanding microscopic scrutiny and reproduction.

For the impressionist the world is an ever-varying chiaroscuro of colours, of lights and shadows, effects and contrasts ; a giant panorama, whose scenes he arrests on his canvas as they pass before him in their never-ending and kaleidoscopic succession.

Critics no doubt are to be found who complain that Velasquez's studies of still life, his Bodegones of an earlier date, so suggestive of the Dutch school, and yet so popular in Spain, display an attention to minutiae almost too literal in its interpretation of the subject ; but with the passage of a few years, this method gave place to the style characterising

those great representative masterpieces of his genius by which Velasquez is best known to the world—the style for which Herrera claimed credit.

The technical detail of the Bodegones was thus exchanged for a “veritable translation of objective impressions” through the medium of colouring, productive of perfect scenic effect; such an effect acts upon the senses in a very different way from the “pocket lens” style of delineation—the result of a laborious rendering of objects in detail.

Velasquez, therefore, is rightly considered the precursor of modern Impressionism; the inaugurator of a new era in the department of colour, and indeed in the annals of art.

In “Los Barrachos” (or “The Topers”) we have a nearly life-sized group of nine. The presiding genius is a coarse-looking Bacchus, seated on a cask and crowned with the inevitable vine wreath. He is in the act of similarly ornamenting the head of a kneeling “Votary”; the grotesque gravity ruling the proceedings being strikingly indicative of desperate attempts to ape a sobriety conspicuous by its absence. Samples of various stages of intoxication are afforded by the rustic spectators of this edifying ceremony.

All of these are more or less overcome by the fumes of "the brimming bowl," the whole crew representing as ill-favoured and ruffianly an assemblage as a merciless realism ever dealt with. The sombre and neutral shades of colouring (the brown, the grey, and the black tones of the picture) are brightened by the gayer "note" of the rose and white drapery thrown over the knees of the Bacchus, and by the yellow jacket of the kneeling votary receiving his crown of vine leaves ; while the high light upon the flesh tints enhances their glowing, lifelike appearance to an amazing degree. The arresting force of the whole conception is, in truth, far more suggestive of a dramatic tableau than a painting, in its vigorous realism.

In this respect the picture has never been surpassed—if even equalled. The varied treatment of facial expression is positively marvellous.

The evil features of the boon companions exhibit emotions ranging from elated hilarity to vacant stupefaction ; and constitute a sarcasm on the vagaries of drunkenness worthy of the humour of Hogarth. The Madrid Gallery contains the original "Los Barrachos," but Velasquez's preliminary sketch is now in the possession of Lord Heytesbury, and is signed

"Diego Velasquez, 1624." Only six figures are here represented, among them being one of an exceptionally hideous negro boy—nowhere found in the picture itself.

The expulsion of the descendants of the Moors from Spain by the father of Philip the Fourth raised a desire in the breast of his son to commemorate an act he admired, and could not imitate. Though there was no more "game" of the same species for him to hunt down, he could at least immortalise the memory of the third Philip in the rôle his successor would fain have emulated.

To ensure the very best rendering of the subject, the King ordered a contest between Carducho, Caxesi, Nardi, and *Velasquez*; the first three Italian by birth but Spanish by adoption, as regarded their artistic life, and all were Court painters. They were also men of distinguished reputation, so that Velasquez entered the field with foemen worthy of his steel. The judges appointed to pronounce a verdict as to the awarding of the prize were the Italian Crescenzi and Fray Juan Bautista, the Dominican; both of them were men fully qualified for their somewhat onerous duty.

CHAPTER IV

RUBENS AND VELASQUEZ

Velasquez wins the prize in the competition—"The Expulsion of the Moriscos"—Rubens visits Madrid—His friendship with Velasquez—His opinion of Philip IV.—Olivares—Rubens' work in Madrid—Contrast between him and Velasquez—Velasquez visits Italy—Venice.

THE prize destined for the winner in this contest between the artists was nothing less than the Usher's Wand of the Royal Chamber; and this was triumphantly carried off by Velasquez. His picture—an allegorical conception—was hung in the Alcazar. It represented the very unheroic figure of Philip III. presiding, truncheon in hand, over the banishment of a number of Moors, who, under custody of a detachment of soldiers, were being marshalled seawards to the ships which were to carry them far over the waves into exile.

From her coign of vantage, backed by a temple, a symbolical figure of Spain (not unlike

a Roman matron) smiled approvingly on the scene, totally unmoved by the weeping women and children.

Artistic and historical interest apart, the subject-matter of the picture, including its symbolism, did not strike as *human* a chord as other works of Velasquez ; in this instance he does not seem to have been so near to Nature's heart, and we cannot help feeling that his pictorial panegyric of the third Philip was an undertaking not worthy of the master hand of the artist, despite its unquestionable merits as a painting.

It is supposed to have been destroyed in 1735 in the fire at the Alcazar ; certainly it has vanished from off the face of the earth by some means. And though no genuine Velasquez can well be spared, the loss of this picture is perhaps on the whole less deplorable than would have been that of many another outcome of the artist's genius.

In addition to the Usher's Wand, Philip IV. conferred on Velasquez the rank of a "Gentleman of the Chamber"—which raised the income of the favourite by twelve reals per day—not to mention the adjunct of ninety ducats per annum for the dress required for his new position.

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Velasquez's father sunned himself in the good fortune of "his Diego," the King's bounty extending from child to parent, so that Don Juan Rodriguez de Silva found himself at this juncture the happy possessor of three different posts in the Government offices at Seville, to the tune of a thousand ducats annually for each appointment.

The summer of 1628 saw the arrival of Rubens in Madrid as Envoy of the Archduchess governing the Low Countries.

Velasquez and the great Fleming were already acquainted by letter. The two men were thus predisposed to like each other, and their meeting was altogether happy.

Besides having much in common, as to temperament and talent, their friendship was clouded by no thought of rivalry, a tribute which cannot be paid to the relations between many of the artistic, literary, or musical giants of the world—such Titans being not infrequently more in conflict than accord, and *genius* being all too often its own "storm centre."

Velasquez seems to have made the most of every opportunity for seeking the society of Rubens during the nine months which the Dutch master spent on his diplomatic mission

in Madrid, acting as his cicerone to the glories of that wonderful city—her churches and galleries—while in the Escorial the two artists offered the incense of their homage at the shrines of Raphael and Titian.

At the date of his visit to Madrid Rubens was in his prime as a painter and as a man, having attained his fifty-first year.

With true diplomatic forethought he paved the way for his mission by the generous gifts of his prowess to the King, whose bent made him most accessible from the artistic point of attack. Though Philip was as usual more disposed to hang fire regarding matters political than to enter with any zest or keenness into negotiations, he proved very ready to sit to Rubens for his portrait, and spent hours in the artist's studio, which he daily visited.

Four paintings of the King were executed, and the entire Royal Family were portrayed on the canvas of Holland's star; Archduchess Margaret (daughter of the Emperor Maximilian), who was now a nun in one of the numerous convents of Madrid, also gave sittings to Rubens.

A large equestrian portrait of Philip II. swelled the number of Rubens' achievements, and represents him at his "worst"—if such a

word may be applied to him without artistic heresy!

The aged, unhealthy face of the monarch is anything but ennobled by its crown of laurel. The very conception of the picture in its stiff formalism constitutes a ponderous and laboured Court compliment, none the more pleasing for being expressed in colours instead of words.

Rubens seems to have been favourably impressed with the intellectual abilities of Philip IV. "Well gifted both in body and mind," he wrote, "this Prince were surely capable of ruling in good or evil fortune, did he rely more on himself and defer less to his ministers; but now he pays for the credulity and folly of others," a sapient remark which neatly sums up the state of the case in a few words; for the guiding brain and directing hand were not those of Philip, but of Olivares.

During his twenty-two years at the helm of State, this powerful and unprincipled minister steered the ship rather to its destruction than its salvation, amidst the shoals and quicksands of the political sea. During his too lengthy period of ascendancy Portugal, together with its extensive possessions in the Indies, was lost to Spain, including territory after territory;

while revolt and disturbance were of common occurrence at home and in Flanders.

The *penchant* for art of this evil genius of Spain was partly genuine, and partly assumed with the object probably of turning the attention of his royal master into other channels than those legitimate for a ruler, and of thus making room for the twistings and turnings of his own tortuous policy.

Books innumerable were dedicated to Don Gaspar de Guzman; Count of Olivares and Duke of San Lucar, "Patron of the Arts and Sciences." His library ranked as one of the sights of the day, enriched as it was with literary treasures and curios of every description. His mode of entertaining was on a scale entirely regardless of cost, while in his halcyon days the fame of the princely mode of life affected by him travelled far and wide. The friendship and patronage of Olivares were shared both by Rubens and Velasquez, and on the arrival of the former at Court the then powerful minister acted the part of friend and patron with most advantageous results for the artist. Whatever his sins as a politician, the better side of Olivares' character apparently came into play in private life, as distinguished from his public career. At any rate, he pos-

essed some amiable and redeeming qualities, and the two renowned contemporaries, Velasquez and Rubens, continued true to him in the dark days which followed his downfall.

Rubens' work in Madrid as painter and diplomatist was broken in upon by frequent attacks of fever and gout, but, thanks to the rapidity with which he handled his brush, he found, or made, time to execute numbers of copies and studies of, and from, the best Italian masterpieces in the Madrid gallery, besides many original pictures in response to public and private commissions. After the changes and chances of nearly four centuries the Royal Gallery at Madrid even now possesses no less than sixty-two paintings by Rubens, and from all accounts Spain at one time surpassed Flanders in the creations of the world-famed Fleming. His three great altarpieces are still to be seen in the Valladolid Museum; while numerous examples of his skill, once the property of Spain, now adorn the walls of English mansions.

The Brobdingnagian specimens of anatomy, posing and sprawling over the giant canvases at Grosvenor House, originated by order of none other than Olivares himself.

Notwithstanding a certain affinity between

Velasquez and Rubens, and despite the connecting-link of naturalism, these two men of genius were at the same time distinguished by very diverse motives of aim and procedure.

After long intimacy with Rubens, and a close study of the best Italian masterpieces, Velasquez continued essentially true to himself as the faithful interpreter of nature through scrupulous observation of environing phenomena.

In contemplating the dazzling "spectacles" of Rubens we are struck by the suggestion of exaggeration conveyed in their emphatically grandiose style. His Herculean types of humanity display an almost aggressive exuberance of animal force, while the wealth of colouring, the gorgeous draperies, and the refulgent jewels bespeak a barbaric splendour absent from the creations of Velasquez. The paintings of his Flemish contemporary are magnificent illustrations of every phase of the superlative in their presentment of the grand, the tragic, and the violent in life, action, and gesture, differing as materially from "translations" of the familiar impressions of normal or mediocre surroundings as a tragedy of Æschylus differs from a rustic idyll.

Velasquez, on the other hand, was specially endowed with the capacity for penetrating with

profound insight into the realities of nature, as personified by his living models. He was distinguished for his *naïveté*, the frankness of his adhesion to the truth of the known actual, and the subordination of his style to this touchstone of his art, namely, to be the faithful imitator of "*That which Is.*" Just as the painter of Philip IV. leaned towards harmonious moderation, just as he was ready to sacrifice imagination to the interests of realism, so in an equal degree did Rubens aim at pomp, stateliness, and an almost ostentatious adherence to the gorgeous and the decorative.

The longing of Velasquez for a visit to Italy increased under the influence of his friendship with Rubens until it finally came to a climax as an accomplished fact.

After much procrastination the King's promises were fulfilled, and Velasquez was accorded a two years' leave of absence. In addition to the retention of his salary, he received a donation of four hundred ducats, which gift was followed by a substantial sum from the Count Duke, together with a gold medal bearing the likeness of Philip IV.

Pareja, the still faithful follower of Velasquez, accompanied his master, and the two set sail

on August 10th, 1629, with Ambrosio Spinola on board, the redoubtable captain being *en route* for the Duchy of Milan—where he was to act as Commander of the Spanish Forces, and direct the siege of Casal.

With what sentiments Velasquez first beheld Venice—"The Queen of the Adriatic"—we leave to the vivid and sympathetic imagination.

As a matter of fact, he was hospitably welcomed and entertained by the Ambassador of Spain, besides enjoying every facility for studying the wondrous charms of the "Fairy City of the Sea." At the date of Velasquez's visit, the full glory of her noontide radiance was already well on the wane, its declining rays falling slantwise on the successors, and not the persons, of such mighty denizens of the art world as Titian, Pordenone, Paolo Caliari, Paolo Veronese, and Tintoretto.

The devotees of these great leaders, though numerous, were far from equalling their predecessors; and wide was the gulf yawning between such disciples and the objects of their cult! In vain they struggled to scale the heights of that sphere of genius, reached only by those to whom "the gods" have given wings.

It is true that Alessandro Varotari (or

Il Padovanino) to a certain extent recalled the style and grandeur of Veronese, whose methods he religiously followed, with the result that his Palazzo interiors suggest the same sense of space and loftiness ; his draperies the same rich luxury ; his figures the same nobility of mien, so reminiscent of the immortal Paolo. Even the ill-tempered-looking species of dog, while belonging to the "stage properties" of the master, is faithfully reproduced to snarl upon the scene.

In the achievements of Pietro Liberi, echoes of Titian are awakened in the caverns of memory, but the most successful pioneer of the disciples may be written down as Turchi—Turchi who had done so much to enrich the churches of the city by his liberal expenditure of artistic energy. But at the date of Velasquez's visit to Venice Turchi had betaken himself to Rome.

CHAPTER V

FIRST VISIT TO ROME

Venetian art at the time of Velasquez's visit—He goes to Rome—Roman artists—Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment"—Raphael—His Vatican frescoes—Velasquez's intercourse with Roman painters—His dwelling on the Pincian—He falls ill—His original work in Rome—"The Forge of Vulcan."

WHILE in Venice, Velasquez's time was chiefly devoted to making copies of the most noted pictures—a "Crucifixion" and "Last Supper" (after Tintoretto). These were subsequently presented by him to Philip IV. At this epoch the school of dark colouring—the "Tenebrosi"—was slowly but surely casting its dusky shadow over the brilliance of the Venetian art world, and Velasquez in consequence lived more in the past than in the present, so far as concerned the influences brought to bear on him as an artist in Venice. His converse was with the dead, with the genius of those whom the "Wing of Azrael"

had swept from the scene of their splendid triumphs; and in his communings with the spirits of Titian, Giorgione, Tintoretto, and other stars of the Venetian constellation, Velasquez gathered inspiration, as he daily traversed "the stones of Venice," and wended his way into St. Marks' cool depths or to the halls of the Doge's Palazzo.

Unfortunately for the interests of his studies the artist had fallen on times of strife, rather than peace, and his musings in churches and galleries were somewhat rudely broken in upon by the war of the Mantuan Succession. Fearing lest his access to Rome might be cut off were he to delay in Venice any longer, Velasquez bid a regretful farewell to "the city of a hundred isles" and proceeded on his pilgrimage Romewards. He halted at Ferrara, where he met with a cordial reception from the Cardinal Legate (Giulio Sachetti), formerly Papal Nuncio in Spain, but in his anxiety to press forward to his ultimate goal the artist only tarried two days on the way. On his arrival at Bologna he withheld his letters of introduction to Cardinals Lodovisi and Spada, fearing lest their polite attentions should cause more delay.

Pushing on *viâ* Loretto, he pursued his

journey across the Apennines, and in due time reached the Eternal City, where Pope Urban VIII. (Maffeo Barberini) and his nephew the Cardinal Barberini accorded him a most gracious welcome. A suite of apartments in the Vatican was offered to the artist ; but he did not avail himself of that honour, preferring a more simple mode of life and lodgment. He petitioned, however, for free access to the Papal galleries, a favour which was readily granted.

Good fortune ruled over Velasquez's Roman experiences, as hitherto over those of his native land. First and foremost he was armed with the very best introductions, so that he entered Rome under most auspicious circumstances ; and last, but by no means least, he carried a well-filled purse, which ensured him freedom from any sordid anxieties. In short, everything contributed to add to his pleasure and facilitate his studies in that wonderful region of historic, classic, and artistic renown, where the dead past and the living present join hands, under the shadow of St. Peter's mighty dome, towering like some colossal sentinel over the Eternal City.

At the epoch of Velasquez's visit, Rome happily differed from Venice in being the proud

possessor of a long "roll call" of artistic genius, whereas the Queen of the Adriatic was living more in the afterglow of a past glory.

Rome, indeed, was instinct with the life of genius *in action*, besides possessing her already magnificent record. A double lustre therefore surrounded her name.

When Velasquez arrived to study Italian art he might well have complained of *embarras de richesse*. A perfect wonder-world surrounded him on all sides. Barely ninety years had elapsed since Michael Angelo had painted his "Last Judgment" in the Sistine Chapel; and from this matchless creation Velasquez recorded many pictorial notes on his own canvas.

The appalling grandeur of the *original* painting inspires, oppresses, or terrifies, according to the disposition of the beholder. Indeed, the psychical suggestion conveyed by "The Prophet" (or "Seer") of the Renaissance supplies a curiously interesting variety of phases in mental life; though the genius of Michael Angelo undoubtedly appeals most forcibly to temperaments *en rapport* with the Tragic and the Horrific; for his is essentially the genius of a Hurler of Thunderbolts. As we gaze on the divine majesty of the Judge, dominating the gigantic spectacle of the Sistine

Chapel, we involuntarily murmur, "Who dare name Him?"

Enthroned, with arm upraised high above the whirling clouds of human creatures, summoned before Him by the archangel's trumpet-blast, His presence strikes upon the senses in overwhelming awfulness; while the atmosphere of the scene throbs with the rush and impact of the thronging multitudes, as though Lucretian atoms had acquired individuality, for the enactment of a cosmic and moral tragedy replete with the immensity of *the Irrevocable*.

Velasquez also studied and copied the works of Raphael—that great representative of the *Humanism* of the Renaissance, whose classical enthusiasm is embodied in his celebrated Vatican frescoes.

Awed by "the sound and fury" of the tempestuous Michael Angelo, though lost in admiration of his stupendous pictorial "Prophecies," we turn with something akin to relief to the exquisite balance, the Athenian "Sanity," and moderation of Raphael's delicately poised genius, whose sensitive perception of the spirituality, or "soul," of beauty is perfectly revealed on the walls of the Camera della Segnatura, in his well-known frescoes of "Poetry" (or the Parnassus),

“Philosophy” (or the school of Athens), “Jurisprudence,” and “Theology.”

Many other chambers in the Papal Palace are likewise embellished by the hand of Raphael. Perhaps the greatest picture in the world—his immortal Sistine Madonna—now hangs in the Dresden Gallery. This and his “Transfiguration” (in the Vatican) are amongst the most famous of his oil-paintings; while the extent and splendour of his other achievements—coupled with his comparatively early death—bear witness to the genius and industry of this artist as being nothing short of miraculous.

At the period of Velasquez’s sojourn in Rome, many artists of the Bolognese School were either visiting or dwelling in the Eternal City. Domenichino and Guercino were actively at work on some of their most celebrated productions; while Guido Reni was devoting himself alternately to the fascinations of art and the feverish excitement of the gaming-table. Such a brilliant muster of contemporaneous talent wrought magical results in the city; the halls of the Borghese and the Aldobrandini were transformed by Arcadian landscapes; “Loves” and “Graces” called into being by the witchery of Albani’s skill, disported themselves amid the beauties of “a land where it is

always afternoon"; while churches and palaces rose on all sides throughout Rome, under the auspices of Bernini—a genius of extraordinary capacity and versatility.

Though mixing freely in artistic society, Velasquez contrived to keep clear of the endless jealousies and bickerings which mar the harmony of pleasurable intercourse. With the advance of spring the charms of the Villa Medici attracted him, and he succeeded in obtaining from the Government (through the instrumentality of the Spanish Ambassador) a permit to take up his residence on that historic spot, the gardens dating back to the ownership of Lucullus.

Here, on the wooded heights of the Pincian Hill, Velasquez looked out over the entire circuit of Rome; and beyond the city to the Campagna intersected by the meanderings of the yellow waters of the Tiber, lying fathoms beneath his feet. The villa itself, at the period under present notice, was a treasure-house of antique marble sculpture, and the Spanish artist shared his dwelling with none other than the matchless Venus of Adrian.

The romantic scenery of the grounds, their bosky shades and mysterious alleys of ilex still exist, though in a state of comparative

neglect. The ancient terraces, crumbling under the finger of Time, remain for the pausings and paces of the feet of the children of the twentieth century. Before their eyes the primrose-hued evening sky turns to the neutral shades of gathering night, while the huge dome of the finest temple in the world still looms in solemn stateliness through the dusk.

Unhappily for Velasquez his meditations in the Medici Villa were prosaically cut short in two months by an attack of tertian fever, induced by the evil sprite malaria, which haunts the Pincian Hills in warm weather, ever ready to swoop down on unwary and unacclimatised strangers. So ill did the artist become that no alternative remained to him but to quit the heights of his picturesque retreat, and he was therefore carried down into the city to be lodged close by the palace of Monterey, from whom he received every kindness and attention, besides the gratuitous attendance of Monterey's private physician.

Velasquez continued to reside in Rome for close upon a year ; and assiduously as he applied himself to the study of the Italian masters, he never diverged from his own style in consequence—following in this respect the example of Rubens.

Some forms of *individuality* of genius are less varied, less open to influence, than others. That of Velasquez resembles the strong, vigorous growth of the forest tree, rather than the pliable, versatile type, sinuous as some luxuriant tropical creeper.

With regard to *original* pictures, he only painted three during his sojourn in Rome, namely, a characteristic portrait of himself (for Pacheco), "The Forge of Vulcan," and "Joseph's Coat"—efforts ranking amongst the most celebrated of his works.

True to his artistic principles, Velasquez continued practically inaccessible to the abstract and the Ideal as well as to all preconceived theories of Beauty. *Actuality*, no matter in how unprepossessing a garb, attracted and kindled his genius as much as Idealisation left it cold.

In "The Forge of Vulcan" the intense Naturalism of the artist comes into full play. Despite their high-sounding titles, the denizens of the Greek Pantheon (Vulcan and Phœbus Apollo) are more human than "divine," even in a pagan sense. They have sunk far below the level of their mythological *status*, so to speak. Vulcan is but a brawny and muscular blacksmith; Apollo merely a finely built,

athletic young countryman, an essentially "everyday young man," retailing a piece of bad news, the only indication of his identity with the bright sun-god being the laurel crown upon his yellow hair, and the nimbus of light about his head.

The subtle symbolism of the Classics fails to touch Velasquez's relentless Realism with any rose-coloured tinge of Romance. The joys and griefs of Homer's gods are, to the artist, merely vehicles for the free exercise of plastic art, for skill in anatomy and technique, resulting in a masquerade of "the Commonplace," in Olympian guise!

Doubtless Velasquez had no direct intention of parodying the myths of Greece. Nevertheless, classical subjects proved more provocative of his Andalusian mirth than incentives to imagination; the humour evoked strongly resembled parody in its grotesque irony of the Cervantes type.

"The Forge" measures ten feet and a half in width and eight feet in height; Vulcan and his Cyclops being grouped with strong dramatic force. If Phœbus were portrayed with the same truthful power, the painting would be unsurpassable; as it is the figures stand out with stereoscopic clearness, the picture being

remarkable for the various sources of *light*, to which the artist has had recourse. '

The halo of the god Apollo, shining on his uplifted arm, constitutes the most radiant "point" in the whole scheme ; its concentrated, sun-like brilliance diffusing rays into the furthest recesses of the cavern, and falling in shafts upon the swarthy forms of Vulcan and his attendants. The uncouth, unkempt Cyclops are craning forward their great heads after the fashion of shaggy buffaloes. They seem anxious to lose not a word of Apollo's tidings regarding the latest scandal in "celestial" circles ; while Vulcan, having suspended his labours at the anvil, stands, with hammer hanging idle from his hands, as he leaves the red-hot iron to cool at leisure, his ugly face a prey to the whole gamut of outraged emotions. The simultaneous blending of pathos with conflicting passions furnishes a startling manifestation of Velasquez's skill ; for the artist has, as it were, seized the psychological moment of the mythical episode, and arrested it on his canvas in a manner best described by what Leonardo da Vinci terms "the *Prontitudine*."

CHAPTER VI

MADRID ROUTINE

“Joseph’s Coat” — Velasquez at Naples — Influence of Stanzioni on Velasquez — His return to Spain — The great equestrian statue of Philip IV.—Tacca is commissioned to execute it—Velasquez supplies Tacca with portraits—Marriage of Velasquez’s daughter Francisca —Portraits of Philip III. and his Consort—And of Olivares and the Duke of Modena—“The Crucifixion.”

THE third original picture painted by Velasquez when in Rome was (as afore-mentioned) “Joseph’s Coat”; its size equals “The Forge of Vulcan,” and it also contains a similar number of figures, the same models having apparently served for both the one and the other—the Patriarch alone excepted.

The scene is laid in a very empty, marble-floored hall, containing only a low bench spread over with a rich oriental carpet, and a chair in a shady, curtained corner of the chamber, upon which the aged Jacob is seated.

The face and figure of the Patriarch are not familiar to us through any previous “acquaint-

ance" with their model in other compositions—as in the case of his sons. In the bereaved father we have a thoroughly Jewish physiognomy; typical small eyes, and elongated nose.

He has evidently only just been apprised of the loss of Joseph; for his arms are flung high in the first paroxysm of horror at sight of the blood-stained tunic. In his expression are mingled grief and anger; with indications of the dread suspicion that concealed *crime* may in reality be the origin of his bereavement. The sons of Jacob we have met before in Vulcan's Forge; but though the artist made use of the same models, their air and bearing are here more debased. The two spokesmen, whom their more shamefaced brethren have thrust forward into an unenviable prominence, are the lowest type of villain that ever vulgarised Velasquez's canvas.

Both are in the act of trying to "carry off" the situation with a loud-voiced assumption of irresponsibility concerning the supposed death of the youthful Joseph; while behind their blustering self-vindication and aped compassion there lurks a sneaking fear lest their guilt as "accessories to the fact" should be detected.

Two of the remaining brethren are hanging back, one taking in the situation with furtive sidelong glances, another biting his nails in nervous embarrassment. The third (probably Reuben) has turned away, as though unable to bear the sight of his father's anguish, and is tearing his hair with averted face.

In respect of its luminosity the picture may be classed as a companion piece to the scene in the smithy ; only here the lights are somewhat differently disposed, coming from behind and from the right-hand side, instead of from the front and from the left ; a shrubbery, or garden in blue-green tones, being visible through the two good-sized windows.

For perfection of technical execution the painting in every way equals "Vulcan's Forge," but its detail is less rich—witness, for instance, the total and conspicuous absence of the "many colours" of Joseph's coat. All the same, there is a pervading atmospheric "ardour" forcibly Eastern in its suggestion, together with the sharply defined "emphatic" shadows common in such latitudes. The dramatic quality of the work, conveying an impression of actual life and movement, is startlingly vivid in its realistic strength.

No engraving of the picture exists, and

after hanging in (Napoleon's) Louvre for a short time, it was replaced in the Escorial.

"The Forge" still hangs in the Queen of Spain's Gallery. It was engraved by Glairon in 1798.

Both "The Forge of Vulcan" and "Joseph's Coat" are striking examples of Velasquez's adhesion to his own particular style, even in presence of the creations of Michael Angelo and Raphael.

Possibly he demurred at seeking to *emulate* the great Italian painters, recognising the more excellent way for him to consist in past-mastership of delineation concerning "the common objects on the seashore" of ordinary surroundings; and therefore preferring the rôle of realistic "specialist" to any attempted aerial flights into the mystical spheres of Idealism.

Hence the shortcomings of Velasquez's Phœbus. For as "the man in the street" is not generally distinguished for beauty on a par with that of an Apollo, our artist would be unlikely to find much suggestion of soul-stirring loveliness, or god-like deportment, amongst models picked up in the market-place, or the forge.

And in so far as the departments of per-

fection are innumerable, so the repulsive realism of a Zola may treat of *La terre* or *L'assommoir* with consummate skill, and the hand of a Velasquez may excel (though so far more nobly) in the representation of swineherds or blacksmiths; while spirituality of thought and æsthetics is made manifest by lovers of the abstract and the ideal.

At the close of the year 1630 Velasquez left Rome for Naples, where the friend and patron of Pacheco, the Duke of Alcala, was then Viceroy. The artist was here engaged on a portrait of the Infanta Dona Maria (sister of Philip IV. and now the wife of King Ferdinand of Hungary), her picture being painted as a "memento" for her brother's gallery in Spain.

So well did Velasquez play his cards while in Naples, that he succeeded in gaining the good will and avoiding the jealous rivalry of his compatriot Ribera, the Valencian. This man, with the help of his two blackguardly allies, Corenzo and Caracciolo, had inaugurated a species of tyrannical "terrorism" in the local kingdom of art.

At the time of Velasquez's visit the art of Naples was at the height of its renown, including in its school many artists of name and fame. But to all appearance the distinguished

visitor was chiefly attracted by the talent of Massimo Stanzioni, an artist of the Guido Reni genus. Although up till then, and despite his Roman and Venetian experiences, he had preserved his own style rigorously intact, Velasquez seems to have become more pliant under this new influence ; for characteristics of the brilliant Neapolitan may be clearly and frequently traced in future creations of the Spanish Realist.

While the year 1631 was yet young, our artist embarked on his homeward voyage ; and having kept within the limit of his two years' leave of absence, arrived once more in Madrid simultaneously with the coming of spring upon the earth.

He received a warm welcome from Olivares, and acting upon the advice of that minister, he repaired as soon as possible to the presence of his royal patron to express his gratitude for the retention of a monopoly of the position of Portrait Painter to His Majesty.

The reception accorded to our artist by Philip IV. was as gracious as that already bestowed on him by Olivares ; the studio of the artist was removed by royal command to the North Gallery of the Alcazar (the Gallery del Ciergo), in direct communication with the

private apartments of Philip IV., whose visits were a well-nigh daily occurrence. For hours together the King was occupied in sitting to Velasquez, or in watching him at work, the first picture executed by the artist after his return from Italy being a portrait of the two-year-old Balthazar Carlos.

The next event of moment was the project, set on foot by Olivares, for a grand equestrian statue of Philip IV., destined to grace the gardens of the Buen Retiro, the Court Painter himself being pressed into the service ; so that Velasquez was called upon to confer with the King and his favourite (Olivares) concerning an adequate fulfilment of the idea.

After due cogitation the commission was given to Tacca, a Florentine sculptor ; while at the suggestion of Olivares, Velasquez supplied both an equestrian, and a half-length portrait of Philip, to aid Tacca in obtaining an accurate fidelity as to attitude and likeness. These precautions were actually augmented by a model, produced for the occasion by Montanes of Seville.

The outcome of these elaborate preliminaries was a fine bronze equestrian statue ; which manifestly bears the impress of Velasquez's genius. This is easily proved by a brief com-

parison of his painting with its bronze "echo," at present before the Royal Palace of Madrid.

The statue itself belongs to the foremost ranks of modern sculpture; its prancing horse caracolliing and pawing the air is "mettlesome" in more senses than one, the fact of its being supported by the hind quarters only recalling to mind a similar class of work contiguous with the St. Petersburg Admiralty. But at the date of its erection (1640) Philip's statue was unique of its kind, and considered little short of a stroke of magic in mechanism. The *on dit* that none other than Galileo himself was responsible for the skilful preservation of the horse's balance is very probably correct. To Tacca accrued the merit of a spirited and splendid piece of equestrian statuary, doing courtly "justice" to the royal rider, and distinguished for beauty and perfection of workmanship. The year 1634 was memorable for Velasquez, owing to the marriage of his daughter Francisca to Juan Bautista del Mazo. The circumstances attendant on the mating of the father, oddly enough, repeated themselves in the case of the daughter, for del Mazo was Velasquez's pupil. Our artist obtained permission to transfer the honour (formerly conferred on himself) of Usher of

the Chamber to his son-in-law, while retaining the merely honorary title of "Aryuda de Guardaropa."

The three years that followed seem to have been consecrated by our artist to portraiture, chiefly of an equestrian nature. With reference to the pictures of Philip's predecessor and his Consort, Velasquez doubtless made use of the paintings of Pontoza for *their likenesses*. Anyhow, he succeeded in producing two very fine portraits, to-day in the Royal Gallery, Madrid. The cuirassed, "beruffled," impassive-faced Philip III. is taking horse exercise along the seashore, at the usual high-stepping paces apparently considered *haut ton* in those ceremonious days. He wears a small black hat, and carries the inevitable truncheon.

Queen Margaret is also on horseback; her piebald "mount" gorgeously tricked out with embroidered trappings; its sumptuous saddle-cloth reaches nearly to the ground; and this, combined with her own elaborate toilet, must have perforce limited the fair equestrian to the stately and measured style of procedure portrayed in the picture.

A cursory glance sets us wondering whether the stiff, ungainly fashions perversely prevalent during the age of Velasquez ever jarred on his

æsthetic sense; whether he ever felt handicapped, as an artist, by such a cumbersome overplus of clothing.

Despite technical merit of a very high order, the *female* portraits of Velasquez lose some of their charm (to modern eyes), owing to their outlandish formality of costume, so disfiguring as regards all natural grace or "proportion."

The paintings of Philip III. and his Queen were followed by an equestrian portrait of Olivares. The Count-Duke is attired in cuirass, a dark sombrero on his head, and over his shoulders a rich crimson scarf, adding its brighter note with like effect to that produced by a similar splash of colour in the artist's celebrated portrait of Philip IV. mentioned in a previous chapter.

The favourite minister is riding an Andalusian bay, of the same showy description as the mounts affected by his royal master, and is looking backward upon a fictitious battle supposed to be in progress in the remote distance, under his auspices.

His *tout ensemble* is that of the ideal Spanish hidalgo of a romanticist's dream. Naturally Velasquez gave of his best when depicting this powerful helmsman of the State, his own friend and patron. Indeed, Sir William Stir-

ling Maxwell says that "the picture enjoyed so great a reputation in Spain (according to Cean Bermudez) that either praise or description of it were superfluous." Portraits of Olivares from the hand of Velasquez were many. After the equestrian, the next most notable represents the Count and Duke of San Lucar in the meridian of his prosperity, standing forth for adulation, handsomely arrayed in black velvet, relieved by the green touches of the Calatrava Cross and the ribbons on his cloak. Portraits seem to have fallen thick and fast as autumn leaves to the share of Velasquez; and in 1638, when the Duke of Modena arrived in Madrid for the purpose of standing godfather to the Infanta Maria Theresa, he speedily gave the artist a commission. This was followed by a proof of his satisfaction in its fulfilment in the shape of a gold chain, worn by the recipient on future high days and holidays.

Portraiture notwithstanding, the year 1639 found Velasquez branching out in a new direction, as though to prove that realists are not necessarily bound down to the ground plan of daily experience.

"The Crucifixion," painted by our artist for the sacristy of the Convent of San Placido, strikes, as it were, a new note in Velasquez's

artistic repertoire—a note thrilling with sublime pathetic agony.

The realistic treatment of the sacred subject accentuates our realisation of the sublime import to a degree almost painful in its vivid intensity; while the fact that no dim landscape distracts the eye, that no lowering, darkened heavens call upon the spectator to witness the desolation of the elements in presence of their Creator's dereliction, causes our gaze to be riveted exclusively on the cross, which stands out from a background of profound black darkness "that can be felt."

The bowed head, the shadowy masses of hair, the blood-stained and bleeding brow, the anatomy of the Holy Body, all are depicted with a commingled strength and feeling, eloquently testifying to the genius of Velasquez, and to his warm-hearted devotion as a Spanish Catholic.

CHAPTER VII

THE DWARF PORTRAITS

Velasquez's portrait of Admiral Pareja—Impressionism and scene-painting—The portrait of the Admiral deceives Philip—The "Dwarf" pictures—The revolt in Catalonia—The Court moves to Saragossa—Velasquez's pictures in this place.

THE sacristy of San Placido, for which Velasquez painted his famous picture of "The Crucifixion," was certainly no fit abode for any masterpiece; its one unglazed window only served to make visible the darkness of the miserable cell. Here, alas! the picture remained in obscurity (in every sense of the word) until King Joseph "discovered" it, when at last it saw the light of day once more. It was finally put up for sale in Paris, where Duke Ferdinand bought it to present to the Spanish Royal Gallery.

In the same year that our artist produced his representation of "The Crucifixion" he painted the portrait of Don Adrian Pulido Pareja, Admiral of the Fleet and Knight of Santiago.

In this picture many have recognised the methods of *Herrera*, so much so that the hand of the erstwhile pupil might have been under guidance of that of his first master. The same kind of exceptionally long brushes were used, and the whole composition is "dashed off" with that bold *empressement* of style peculiar to the volcanic *Herrera*.

From a suitable distance the portrait is extraordinarily realistic—quite stereoscopic; but on nearer approach "the impression" resolves itself into more or less of a conglomeration of blotches, somewhat after the fashion of a closely-inspected scene-painting; while tentative suggestion whispers of the possibility that scene-painting as such may, after all, be second, third, or fourth cousin to Impressionism, an unrecognised vulgar "relation" belonging to a lower stratum of art life.

Viewed from the seats of the theatre, a present-day Lyceum landscape could well-nigh deceive the very elect; but on closer acquaintance the "enchantment" of illusion, lent by distance, materialises into a magnified expanse of paint-blotted canvas, the charm and "mystery" of its cleverly-depicted scenery receding from us by degrees as we approach, until it is altogether lost.

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That the sensational nature of extreme Impressionism characterised the Admiral's portrait, is fully proved from its effect on Philip IV. himself.

Strolling one morning into Velasquez's studio, the King was startled and annoyed to see Admiral Pareja (apparently) lounging in a dusky corner of the room. According to royal commands he ought to have been on the high seas. Philip's angry interrogation met with no response, and His Majesty very soon made the astounding discovery that he had been addressing a picture instead of a man. This gives some idea of the realistic powers of our artist—powers that could call up the image of the absent so effectually, that even to an *habitué* of his studio the illusion was complete.

With reference to portraiture, there remains a strange province of Velasquez's art, as Court painter, that we have not as yet alluded to, and which very probably would have proved a source of disgust rather than satisfaction to a man of hyper-sensitive, fastidious temperament. Were it possible for us to put our own "clock of time" back to the era of Velasquez; and were we then to contrive a visit to the Alcazar of Madrid, we should find amongst its splendours Ugliness, cheek by jowl with

Beauty ; we should see the freakish "moods" of morphology embodied before our eyes, and confronting us at every turn in the person of the *Dwarfs*. These grotesque caricatures of humanity, if judged by their extreme ugliness, would seem utterly undeserving of the immortality which artistic genius has conferred upon them. They appear rather to have merited no better fate at the close of their lives than to be bottled in spirits and consigned to a shelf in some laboratory as pathological specimens. Some of them appear to be on the defensive, or in a fume of suppressed resentment against the normal faces and figures surrounding them, a mood which only serves to make their own deformity more frightfully apparent. Velasquez's clever painting of "Sebastian Morra" seated on the ground and glaring into space with comic ferocity, is graphic enough to call forth the remark of Justi, that we no sooner see the picture than we instantly expect "to be greeted by a torrent of abusive language" from its choleric subject.

Velasquez took portraits of five of these little creatures ; and in one of his most famous paintings—"Las Meninas" (or "The Maids of Honour")—the dwarfs Nicolasito, Pertusano, and Maria Barbola, act as foils to the Infanta

Maria Margarita and her ladies-in-waiting. The diminutive "Maria" measured just three feet and a half in height, and was characterised by a weird and forbidding cast of countenance.

Philip IV. made a thorough hobby of collecting dwarfs—much in the same way as a man may make a hobby of collecting old china or rare orchids—and every corner of Europe was ransacked for "specimens," the more monstrous and peculiar the better. But although the Alcazar was overrun by freaks dressed up in silks or velvets, and adorned with gold and jewels, this enigmatical, complex King cannot be said to have taken out a "patent" for their introduction, neither could he claim to have made "a corner in dwarfs." The queer custom itself originated ages ago in the Far East, and was continued in the days of Imperial Rome and through the Middle Ages, lasting on to the time of the Revolution.

"El Primo's" manly, bearded face, surmounted by a sweeping plumed hat, looks strangely incongruous with his tiny, velvet-clad body. He was in high favour at Court and with the Count-Duke Olivares, though probably his figure, not his face, was his "fortune." As the clouds of impending disaster lowered more darkly over the once all-

powerful minister, he seems to have derived a melancholy pleasure from El Primo's company, often taking him out in his carriage. This dwarf's portrait by Velasquez hangs in the Madrid Gallery, together with the artist's other pictures of buffoons, idiots, and dwarfs. All were executed about the same time, between the years 1644 and 1648; the *Bobo de Coria* (or "Laughing Idiot") and the "Boy of Ballicas" being remarkable for their humorous style of treatment—although it is the humour of a nightmare in Bedlam! According to Carl Justi, Velasquez took more genuine interest in freaks than in the normal creations of Nature, and laid more stress on peculiarities than on the harmony of beauty. This was rather fortunate under the circumstances, as "chance threw in his way exceptionally repellent types, as well as fashions in dress marked by monstrous perversions of good taste." Therefore "Velasquez's success in delineation, which stood in almost inverse ratio to the æsthetic value of his subjects," was peculiarly suited to the age in which he lived.

Why the grotesque and the abnormal possessed such strong attractions in those days is a psychological riddle "monstrous hard to read," and constitutes a problem of no small

interest for any student of the human mind. During the Italian Renaissance we constantly come across examples of this peculiar *penchant* characterising some of Italy's greatest men.

What else but a love of the grotesque could have induced Leo X. to order monkeys and crows to be served up at papal banquets, and Cardinal Vitelli to choose forty-four dwarfs as waiters at a feast which he gave in Rome? The sketch-books of Leonardo da Vinci are full of ghastly and extraordinary reminiscences of idiots, criminals, and clowns; while he allowed lizards, newts, toads, and vipers to make his studio "lively" with their crawlings and hoppings.

The same curious development may have been responsible for the creations of Piero di Cosimo—who delighted to expend his genius and his energy on the delineation of a dragon, or a satyr; and whose very landscapes seemed under some witchery of enchantment, conjured up by the distorted imagination of a fevered brain. But we might multiply instances *ad libitum*; and we will only pause before concluding this digression to remark that to us the nearest approach to a solution of the problem lies in the fact that certain *influences* act upon, and reach certain frames of mind, in

so far as the psychical suggestion conveyed accords with the mental state of the subject influenced; abnormal brains, or exceptional natures, sometimes *vibrating* to a singularly peculiar keynote!

Whilst the hand of Velasquez was "immortalising" dwarfs and other parodies on humanity, in paintings more like gnomes than men and women, and whilst such bizarre creations were casting the spell of the uncanny over the Northern Gallery of the Alcazar, the political situation reached the climax of its gravity in the revolt of Catalonia. The policy of Olivares had proved a veritable "sowing of dragons teeth," and he now reaped the gruesome and unwelcome harvest of an all too plentiful crop of "armed men," springing up to the right and left of what had once been a flowery path. The inhabitants of Barcelona, after first putting their viceroy to death, took possession of the fortress of Monjuich, where they clasped hands with a formidable French garrison. Nor was this all. Portugal quickly took the cue from its opposite frontier, and seizing the opportunity offered by neighbouring disaster, "slipped the collar" of Spanish control, and acknowledged the Duke of Braganza as king.

Such a piling of "Pelion on Ossa" was

enough to rouse even the sluggish temperament of a Philip the Fourth, and the King so far shook off his lethargy as to try the effect of his presence on the Catalans, in the hope that it might perchance *awe* them into submission. In 1642, therefore, the entire royal household (including Velasquez, the Court actors, and probably the dwarfs) set out for Saragossa, the first halt in the progress being at Aranjuez.

This veritable Arcadia is situated in a sheltered valley and embowered in forest trees, its beauty being enhanced by an "architectural romance" in the shape of a palace fit for a fairy prince. Long white arcades and gilt vanes shine and glint amongst the green leaves of the woodland, while below the walls of the palace the waters of the Tagus and the Xarama flow and commingle.

Travellers from La Mancha may still refresh both eye and brain with the sight afforded by Aranjuez, and share in spirit the raptures of old Castilian poets over this earthly paradise. For a long period the island garden was left to waste its sweetness unheeded, but happily it is once more well cared for. The sylvan landscape, with its wealth of verdure, its dense avenues—shady as an incense-dimmed cathedral nave—its statues and cool splashing foun-

tains, recall the days of Philip IV., when the Court made gay the solitudes, and the twanging and thrumming of guitars accompanied the singing of birds and the buzzing of insects.

To-day the water-pipes, so dexterously concealed in the topmost branches of the trees, no longer surprise unwary visitors with their mimic showers. The fountains alone are active, while all the fantastic pageantry that transformed the forest and gardens of Aranjuez into scenes worthy of record by the pen of a Greek mythopoeist, have long since passed away. But the camels, those relics of Moorish Orientalism, may be seen to this day, stalking to and fro, fetching and carrying, as in the reign of Philip II., in the service of garden cultivation. Here, surrounded by woods, rose blooms, running waters, and bright flower-beds, Velasquez wandered in attendance on his royal patron, or watched from some bowery nook the mysterious play of light and shade, the dance of the hours through the sunlit realms of day, to the silver sheen of moon and stars at nightfall. It is to the artist's sojourn at Aranjuez that we owe his charming park views and sketches of garden scenery. The Royal Gallery was the receptacle of some, "The Avenue of the Queen," for instance, and a study of "The

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Fountain of the Tritons." The former picture represents a stately avenue of splendid elms meeting overhead, their density only penetrated by a single shaft of sunshine at the far end. This "tunnel of greenery" starts from the Palace Gate and is twice crossed by the River Tagus, whose waters reflect the shimmering leaves of the avenue where it finally merges in a thicket of weeping willows and elms—"still life," animated by a group of figures from the Court, Velasquez having depicted three sixes-in-hand between a double line of cavaliers just about to pass the park-ranger's barrier.

CHAPTER VIII

OLIVARES FALLS

The Court at Cuenca—Return to Madrid—Fall of Olivares—His adopted son Julianillo—Velasquez paints Julianillo's portrait—His last portrait of Olivares—Sympathy of Velasquez with the fallen minister—The rebellion in Catalonia—Philip takes the field—Besieges and captures Lerida—Velasquez's picture on the occasion—Death of Queen Isabella—Portraits of the Prince of the Asturias.

IN June Philip IV. repaired with the Court to Cuenca, remaining for a month in that romantic old city, where he seems to have occupied himself chiefly with hunting and the drama. After a brief sojourn at Molina, he finally proceeded to Saragossa—having taken his journey easily, to say the least. Whether any real good came of the King's northern progress is a question better left without an answer. Certainly he took but scant share in the campaign, and one of the best results seems to have been the effect of "the progress" on Velasquez's art, as it afforded him the chance of studying the pictorial aspect of affairs

military. To modern notions the circumstances attending Philip's move, as they affected the political situation, read more like those belonging to "a holiday soldier's tour," than events befitting an occasion of such national gravity. While the Wheel of Fate threatened to crush Spain with its adverse revolvings, this easy-going monarch could actually lull his senses by "lotus eating" in Aranjuez, or divert himself with the chase and dramatic representations at Cuenca—dragging a whole Court in his train.

To sum up, there was all the paraphernalia of a legendary "heroic romance," with the daring deeds left out—*by desire*.

For the winter Philip returned to Madrid, and in the year 1643 the fortunes of Olivares, which for some time past had been ominously tottering, came down with a crash—metaphorically burying him in the ruins. The immediate cause of his collapse is traced to the *faux pas* of his adoption of a certain Julianillo—a young man of illegitimate parentage and questionable antecedents. This son of a well-known Spanish courtesan was not very likely to be received with open arms by the illustrious "House of Olivares," and the unlucky minister effectually and permanently cut himself off from its support by his quixotic action, thus severing with

his own hand the rope that might surely have rescued him from out of the débris of shattered fortune.

It was owing to the influence of Olivares that Julianillo's reputed father had been made to acknowledge his son ; and the child grew up anything but a credit to the efforts made on his behalf, turning out a worthless, ill-conditioned youth, no sooner free of one scrape than he was landed in another. Shipped off to try his luck in Mexico, he went from bad to worse ; at one time only escaping the hangman's clutches by the skin of his teeth. He was next heard of in Flanders serving as a common soldier ; and after following the same avocation in Italy, he turned up again like a bad penny in Spain—happily for him at the crucial moment when Olivares had just buried his only daughter, and with her all hopes of any lawful descendants. The Count-Duke at once appropriated Julianillo, and threw him into the breach caused by the untimely death of his sole surviving child. By the bold stroke of adoption he constituted the young man “understudy” in his unscrupulous manœuvres, which had for their object the wreck of the prospects of his kinsmen—those hated scions of the Houses of Medina-Sidonia and

Carpio—against whom he seems to have harboured a bitter hatred.

Bent as he was upon his spiteful project, the Count-Duke gladly utilised even so unpromising an instrument as Julianillo. In addition to naming him his heir, under the title of Don Henrique de Guzman, and causing his previous disgraceful marriage to be dissolved, he contrived to bring about an alliance between this adopted son and a daughter of the Constable of Castile, besides loading him with Orders, high offices of State, and honorariums without end. Olivares' "iniquities" in this direction were at last consummated by a wild scheme for raising the base-born adventurer (at one time a street-singer in Madrid) to the position of Governor of the Heir-Apparent, together with the mad ambition for the ultimate elevation of his protégé to the Spanish Premiership! One of the many ways chosen by the Count-Duke for introducing Julianillo was to order his portrait to be painted by Velasquez. Formerly the property of the Count of Altamira, this picture now hangs in Lord Ellesmere's gallery.

It represents a dark-complexioned, pensive Castilian, whose looks—according to the portrait—were no index of his character; and

thus Velasquez displayed to the world a dignified Spanish nobleman, with no trace about him to indicate how factitious such "nobility" was in reality.

He is dressed in the bravery befitting his recent exaltation in life ; one hand holds a blue and white plumed hat, the other an ensign of one of his numerous Orders. The Cross of Alcantara on his breast, however, only serves to add irony to the glaring—almost comic—incongruity of the situation as it has subsequently come down to history.

Merely the upper part of the picture is completed ; a significant sign, probably indicative of the rapid flash of this "comet of a season" across the political darkness of the period ; a brief blaze, and the cynosure of all eyes shot forth into those spheres which are beyond the historical range of vision—or the telescope of research. Out of obscurity back into obscurity once more.

Velasquez's last portrait of Olivares, now in the Duke of Westminster's collection, was painted shortly before the minister's fall. In the foreground the Infant Balthazar Carlos, a boy of about twelve, sits a prancing horse, a dwarf in his rear ; while a few paces off Olivares, in the capacity of Court riding-master, stands

talking with the other Spanish grandees, one of whom is offering him a lance. The Count-Duke is dressed in a dark suit, with white riding-boots. From a window balcony of the palace Philip IV., his Queen, and little daughter look down upon the group.

Soon after the completion of this painting Olivares' hazardous venture of the Julianillo "speculation" brought Nemesis to the door of the Ministerial Cabinet—and from the door to the interior.

Face to face with the fact of an irreparably damaged position, and goaded by the sting of events, consequent on his adoption of Julianillo, Olivares lost his head, "plunged" yet more heavily, and sent in his resignation, only to find he had gone from Scylla to Charybdis! For he was taken at his word, and his resignation was no sooner tendered than it was accepted; he had staked all, only to lose all.

By royal command he "retired" to Loeches, where he endeavoured to drown the bitterness of retrospection in amateur farming; and by working at an "apologia" of his equivocal career as a statesman. Six months were spent in writing the book, and attending to the farm, when he once more received marching orders, his destination being the dilapidated town of

Toro on the Douro, cut off from Madrid by a distance of thirty-seven leagues.

Here the unhappy man broke down, and became a prey to profound melancholy under the dreary tedium of his "burial alive"; the very stagnation of such an existence constituted an acute form of suffering after years lived at high pressure in Court and Cabinet. The tender mercies of Philip towards his former favourite were thus far more cruel than if he had signed a warrant for his execution, in a rough-and-ready mediæval way, and exhibited his head in a public square after the methods of Cæsar Borgia.

As it was he wounded his minister to the death, and then left him to die by inches of a broken heart.

Two years passed before the tragedy was played out; and whether intellect gradually loosened under the strain of suffering, we cannot tell, though rumours of dealings in magic side by side with melancholia have an ugly significance.

Gall and wormwood were added to the already bitter portion of Olivares by the ingratitude of the majority of those whom he had benefited while in place and power. The two most prominent exceptions were the Grand

Inquisitor and Velasquez. When the Count-Duke's experiments in the Black Art had got noised abroad the Inquisitor quietly averted all further danger just at the critical time when the Holy Office was about to institute proceedings; and the object of such solicitude was probably within measurable distance of an even worse fate than the one he already endured.

Velasquez's sorrow for the loss and social death of his distinguished patron proved genuine to the core. He even visited the exile in his place of banishment—a bold and most unconventional proceeding in those days, when fallen statesmen and disfavoured “favourites” were regarded more or less as pariahs.

In justice to Philip IV. it must not be forgotten that the artist in nowise suffered for openly befriending Olivares after his disgrace. Possibly the King admired Velasquez all the more for having the courage of his opinions, and in the very same year he was raised to the dignity of Gentleman of the Royal Chamber.

During the years 1643 and 1644 Velasquez travelled with the Spanish Court to Aragon. It was the epoch of Condé's triumph on the field of Rocroy, and for Spain active measures had become imperative. The power of the

rebels in Catalonia, augmented as it was by French allies, could no longer remain unreckoned with, and Philip at last rose to the demands of the situation. Very possibly his freedom from the sway of Olivares went far to arouse him from the inertia of his protracted lethargy concerning affairs of State. Now that there was no political wire-puller to relieve him of all exertion, he was in a measure *compelled* to think and act for himself, compelled to bestir himself, stretch his limbs and clutch the reins of government with a firmer grasp. "Royal progresses" were not the sum total of his achievement this time. On the contrary, he decided to take the field in person, and he headed his troops like a soldier and a man, pomp and regal purple notwithstanding.

After besieging Lerida with all the skill of a practised tactician, the King was rewarded by a triumphal entry into the city on August 7th, 1644. He himself was chief actor on the military stage, and was gorgeously arrayed for the title-rôle of conquering hero.

Velasquez immortalised the event in all its rich caparisoning of gold and jewels, glint and glitter, nodding plumes and royal magnificence; while at Court the victory of Spain caused a perfect efflorescence of rejoicing.

But (such is life) the quicksilver rapidly sank from elation to depression in the register of the emotional atmosphere ; for Queen Isabella—Philip's consort—died very shortly after the fall of Lerida. Bossuet has described her as the best and most lamented Queen of Spain since the days of Isabella the Catholic, and to us she is familiar through the agency of Velasquez. His equestrian portrait of her is to be seen in the Royal Gallery of Madrid at the present day. Her great dark eyes glow and kindle above the "assisted" brilliancy of her complexion, for she lived at a time when the rouge habit was in full force among Castilian beauties—an inevitable accompaniment to the farthingales, ruffings, crimpings, and all-round artificiality of that age. She wears a riding-dress of black velvet, studded with pearls, thrown up in bold relief against the pure white of her Andalusian palfrey, the whole affording a very telling contrast of tones.

The picture originated as a complement to an equestrian portrait of Philip IV., and was the last which our artist ever painted of Queen Isabella.

Although the young Prince of the Asturias was cut off in his seventeenth year, several portraits of him exist, from the hand of Velas-

quez. Three full-length portraits, wherein he figures either in shooting costume or Court dress, hang in the Royal Gallery of Madrid, while another (belonging to a private collection of rarities) is enumerated by Sir W. Stirling Maxwell as a picture "excelling in lustre and brilliancy of colouring."

Velasquez also painted the young hopeful as "a small edition" of his royal father's equestrian portraits—dressed after the same fashion, cuirass and red scarf all complete, the chief difference in the replica being the round boyish face of the miniature horseman.

CHAPTER IX

ITALY ONCE MORE

"The Surrender of Breda"—Velasquez visits Italy for the second time—His purchases in Venice—Naples—He renews acquaintance with Ribera—Don Juan of Austria II. meets Ribera. The consequences of their acquaintance.

IF those historians are right who have fixed 1647 as the date of the great picture "The Surrender of Breda," called also "The Lances," from twenty-nine of those weapons which are such a conspicuous feature in the work, it is certainly strange that the King's Court-Painter should have postponed the representation of an exploit which brought so much glory to Spain, not merely till twenty-two years after the event, but until ten years after the "bulwark of Flanders" had been once more wrested by the House of Orange from Spanish dominion.

Setting aside the difficulty as to the date, however, the subject was undoubtedly worthy of the foremost painter of his age. The con-

quest of Breda was probably the most brilliant exploit of Spinola's career, eclipsing in glory the capture of Ostend. For his happiness, in this world at least, it would have been well had he died at the moment that the keys of the city were delivered to him, for his next campaign was destined to sound the knell of royal and popular favour. His command in Italy was hampered, in spite of his immense prestige as a general, and the unmerited disgrace under which he almost immediately afterwards sank into the grave was in sorrowful contrast to the glory with which Spain and his native republic of Genoa had crowned him but a few years earlier. It may be that the great, but undeserved opprobrium which the Italian campaign brought upon Spinola, induced Velasquez to postpone the painting of the surrender of Breda. Be this as it may, the artist possessed exceptional qualifications for the task. In 1629 he had been thrown into intimate companionship with the great captain on their voyage between Barcelona and Genoa. The features, the form, the very mannerisms of Ambrosio Spinola must therefore have become perfectly familiar to the keen eye of Velasquez, and the picture itself shows that the artist was painting not from his imagination—a thing he

never did—but from the description of an eyewitness. From Spinola himself, doubtless, Velasquez heard the details of the scenery, and of the military grouping of the great drama in which his informant had been the central figure. And while the eyes of the artist gazed upon the blue waters of the Mediterranean, his mind was riveted upon the fortress in Northern Brabant, where, after a ten months' siege, the honour of Spain had been vindicated. The moment one looks at the picture one feels that Velasquez had in view something greater than the mere illustration of a triumph, albeit that triumph had caused more rejoicing than any event since the Battle of Lepanto. He meant his work to be a monument to Spinola himself, a powerful, and if it might be, an enduring protest against the injustice which had allowed the brightness of the conqueror's fair fame to be dimmed.

The picture indeed shows us something nobler than a victory. It perpetuates the respect, nay the reverence, which every chivalrous soldier feels for a brave enemy. Spinola has dismounted from his charger, and is in the act of meeting the Governor, Justin of Nassau. But his mien is far from that of a haughty conqueror. With head bared and shoulders

bowed, he leans forward, resting his hand in kindly sympathy upon the shoulder of his vanquished foe, as though to emphasise in presence of the Spaniards, Hollanders, Germans, and French who looked on, that in surrendering the "Right Eye of the Netherlands," Justin's honour remained as stainless as that of the conqueror himself. Spinola indeed takes no heed of the proffered key which Justin holds. All his thoughts seem to be concentrated upon administering consolation to his late enemy, and we can almost hear him remind Justin that the victor's fame depends upon the courage of the vanquished. As a French writer has finely said, his graciousness and urbanity are almost enough to make a man wish that he could lose a citadel for the pleasure of handing him its keys.

Such was the monument which Velasquez raised to the gentlest, bravest, and most humane captain of his day—a monument more enduring than brass and more fitted to touch the hearts of those for whom he had fought and conquered.

The garrison of Breda had surrendered on terms honourable both to themselves and to their foes. With flags flying, with drums beating, bearing their loaded arms, the infantry

set out from the Hertogenbosch Gate, led by what remained of the decimated cavalry, who were mounted and equipped as if on the field of battle. Under flying streamers, and amid the blare of trumpets, the gallant but exhausted army made its way towards Balançon's quarters, where Spinola, surrounded by princes and nobles, awaited its arrival. Then took place the scene which Velasquez has immortalised. The central figures, upon which an actual on-looker's gaze would naturally be riveted, are of course the most conspicuous, and the very scanty details of military movement and the mere suggestion of the fortress in the middle distance do nothing to divert attention from the two commanders. And yet Velasquez has contrived with consummate skill to depict the staffs of the two armies in such a way that while the canvas is in no way overcrowded, and while an open space is left for the meeting of Spinola and Justin, the spectator's imagination is instantly fired with the idea of thousands of armed men drawn up on either side in battle array beyond the range of the picture. Those who form the group nearest to Spinola are readily identified from records and portraits. Others outside the immediate circle of grandees, though evidently likenesses, are more doubt-

fully recognisable. The same may be said of Justin's suite. The treatment of the landscape in the background is in the highest degree masterly. Here again, on a comparatively small canvas, an impression of magnitude is conveyed. And this time it is not merely the imagination which is awakened, for by a beautiful device of perspective we are shown a wide and extensive landscape with the River Merk lit up by the sun, the lowlands quivering in the uncertain haze of the hot June morning, and in the middle distance the redoubt of the inner lines. Between the two groups in the foreground we see the march of the surrendered garrison, followed by the Spanish lancers. Upon this space the brightest light is thrown, and thus it serves as an admirable background for the figures of Spinola and Justin. Again, the whole scheme of light in the landscape throws into relief the warm hues of the opposing groups, with their wealth of colour. We seem indeed to breathe the very atmosphere of the bright June morning, which has sent its joyous glow upon this scene of reconciliation and peace.

In 1647 Velasquez had been appointed inspector of the work of partially rebuilding the

Alcazar. This itself would scarcely deserve mention here had it not led, indirectly at least, to the important event of his second visit to Italy. Nineteen years had gone by since, in the company of Spinola and his staff, Velasquez had embarked at Barcelona to see for the first time the wonders of Rome. His ruling object on that occasion had been study; for the equipment of an artist's mind could hardly have been complete without some personal acquaintance with the originals of Italian art.

But this second visit sprang from a motive wholly different. Certain rooms in the Alcazar, especially the new octagonal chamber for which as inspector he was responsible, needed adornment. For this purpose statues, casts, and bronzes were required. Other works of art were also wanted, and for these the best markets were unquestionably to be found in Rome and Venice. Velasquez needed but little persuasion to undertake the necessary purchases. He started from Malaga in the new year of 1649, and after a voyage in which he ran the risk of capture by French privateers, he landed on the 11th of February at Genoa, under the protection of the Spanish envoy who was on his way to receive the new Queen, Mariana of Austria, at Trent. After a hurried sight of

Da Vinci's "Last Supper" at Milan, Velasquez hastened on to Venice. In that city a man only needed artistic acumen and a long purse to gather together as princely a collection of pictures and curios as he cared to possess. Our artist was well provided with both these qualifications. Of his judgment relating to the genuineness of art treasures there could not be a doubt, while the length of his purse was only limited by that of Philip's own.

But for once the good fortune of Velasquez failed him, at least in part; for his sojourn in Venice seems to have occurred at a period of comparative slackness in the artistic market. Before leaving Madrid he had assured Philip that if he went to Italy he would bring back the choicest works of Titian, Raphael, and others. "For," he added, "there are few princes who possess pictures by these masters, and least of all to such an extent as your majesty shall acquire through my zeal." But so far as Venice was concerned his success was less brilliant than he had anticipated. Before his arrival a tapestry copied from one of the cartoons was sold to a purchaser who had outbid the Earl of Arundel. And in the years which followed his departure from Venice, the market contained treasures which the artist

would certainly have bought had they been available during his visit. For instance, Tintoretto's wonderful "Marriage Feast," and one of Titian's works were offered for sale in 1657, in consequence of the suppression of two religious houses by Alexander VII. The "Marriage Feast" was bought for the Salute.

Still this visit to Venice enabled Velasquez to add five pictures to the royal collection. Among them was a Veronese (the Venus and Adonis) now in the Prado, and a Tintoretto, a sketch of the master's principal work in the Gran Consiglio. Velasquez regarded this as his greatest acquisition. Altogether the Venetian purchases amounted to twelve thousand crowns.

No sooner had Velasquez reached Rome than he immediately started for Naples, where he was presented to Onate, the Viceroy, who had been requested, in the letter of introduction which the artist brought, to help him in his mission.

His object in visiting Naples was to obtain bronze and plaster castings, but readers of the present day will feel more interest in the acquaintance which he renewed with his distinguished fellow-countryman, Jusepe Ribera. Twenty years had passed since they last met,

and to both artists the period had been an eventful one. Ribera as Court painter to the Viceroy of Naples, and Velasquez holding a similar position in Madrid, had both won for themselves undying fame. But to Ribera an event had occurred which embittered his life and turned his successes into Dead Sea fruit. The artist whose unrivalled "Pietà" displays the very ideal of human sorrow, was himself destined to endure a grief the most poignant that can pierce a father's heart. He had two daughters. The beauty of the younger still appeals to us after the lapse of two and a half centuries, as we gaze on her father's great painting of the "Immaculate Conception," for which she was the model. This picture, destined to adorn the high altar in the church of St. Isabella in Madrid, was finished in 1646. Twelve months later Don Juan, the natural son of Philip, appeared in Italy. In Naples he made the acquaintance of Ribera, who painted his portrait. But one miserable day the artist invited Don Juan to his home. At an evening entertainment this bastard sprig of royalty made the acquaintance of the beautiful Maria Rosa, Ribera's youngest daughter. The father had reason to curse his folly in admitting into his home a guest whose sole attraction lay in his

kinship to the royal house. The acquaintance thus begun was fatal to Ribera's happiness and to his daughter's honour. Maria Rosa fell a victim to Don Juan's wiles, and her miserable father sank into grief which was little short of despair. He quitted Naples and retired to a country place. As late as 1652 he was still practising his art, after that year he vanishes from the page of history. But visitors to the Louvre may still recognise in Ribera's painting of "The Shepherds" the features of his lost child. He has found consolation in depicting her as the purest creature of God—"our tainted nature's solitary boast"—as the Virgin whose eyes are turned towards heaven, whence he might hope would come the remedy for the ruin which man had begun.

CHAPTER X

SECOND VISIT TO ROME

Rome in 1650—Visit of Velasquez—His artist contemporaries
The Pope commissions him to paint his portrait—Difficulties of the task—Portrait of Juan de Pareja—Of Innocent—Characteristics of portraiture—Admiration excited by Innocent's portrait—Velasquez collects art treasures—Returns to Madrid.

ROME was full to overflowing with strangers when our artist paid his second visit to the city in the year 1650. The great Jubilee was about to open, and immense throngs of pilgrims poured into the town. Every class was represented—from the princes of royal houses and wealthy nobles, who had come from far and near, down to the humblest Catholic who could afford to make the journey and defray the cost of his lodging.

But Rome was not just then the most comfortable abode for a subject of Philip. The high-handed and insolent conduct of the Spanish enlisting agents, who had even the audacity to molest some of the pilgrims, must

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have tended to interfere with the popularity and comfort of their more peaceful fellow-countrymen. And the irritation of the Roman populace was scarcely appeased even by the triumph which they achieved in defence of a party of pilgrims who had been attacked by the Spanish agents in the Piazza of St. Peter. The obnoxious recruiting officers were, on this occasion, overpowered by the sturdy peasants and promptly lodged in gaol.

The eminent position which Velasquez had now attained, as well as the essentially pacific character of his mission, no doubt raised him in great part above the turmoils in which some of his compatriots were engaged, and though his nationality was against him, he seems to have mixed with the highest artistic circles in Rome. These distinguished groups included Calabrese, the great fresco painter, who completed Lanfranco's unfinished work in Sant Andrea; as well as Pietro Berettini, whose scenes from Virgil, with which he decorated two of the rooms in the Pamfili Palace, became so famous that they were copied by the Flemish tapestry makers, and whose name, "Pietro di Cortona," was changed by a happy anagram into "corona de pittori;" besides these we must mention Nicholas Poussin, who then

lived in Rome, and Algardi, a native of Bologna, then in the zenith of his career, which was destined to be cut short a few months later by his premature death. The greatest work of this sculptor is his "Leo I. and Attila," executed for the altar of St. Leo, in St. Peter's. Philip IV. secured a silver model of this relief, cast from the original, but whether Velasquez had any share in obtaining it or not is open to conjecture.

Perhaps the chief celebrity in Rome in that age of giants, one who towered above most of his fellows, was Salvator Rosa.

His house was the resort of all the art connoisseurs of the city, and we are gravely assured that he could not stroll through the streets and piazzas without being surrounded by a kind of guard of honour consisting of poets and musicians, all of them eager to attract the great man's attention.

Velasquez had been sent to Italy to buy artistic treasures, and yet of works by Rosa we find no trace among his purchases. Justi suggests a political explanation of this curious fact. Salvator Rosa was a keen patriot, and when the insurrection of Massaniello broke out, he had hastened to Naples, his native country, and thus displayed his anti-Spanish

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feelings. This may now have obliged Velasquez, who represented Philip's interests, to avoid his society. But this visit of the Spanish painter to the Eternal City was destined to be marked by something greater than any purchase and more enduring than any friendship.

The reigning Pontiff, Innocent X., commissioned him to paint his portrait. Under any circumstances, and for any artist, this task would have been an honourable and a difficult one, but its difficulty and its honour were increased in the case of Velasquez. Here, in the centre and focus of the art world, was a foreigner, the native of a country which many of the Romans detested, called upon to uphold his own reputation and that of his royal master by delineating the features of the Supreme Pontiff. Several months had passed since he had handled a brush, and though genius can never really lose its cunning, Velasquez must have been conscious that there would be danger in attempting a work of such importance under the very eyes of the keenest and most jealous critics, unless he first of all ascertained that his hand was as completely under his mastery as it had been before this long period of repose.

To put this beyond doubt he set to work

upon a portrait of his servant Juan de Pareja, who was himself, later on, an artist of no mean sort. When finished, the portrait was sent by the hand of Pareja himself to the studios of some of the painter's friends, and so enthusiastic was their admiration that they declared themselves in doubt which was the original and which the picture! On the Feast of St. Joseph in that year it was exhibited with other paintings in the Pantheon, where it excited such wonder, according to Andreas Schmidt, who was then in Rome, "that in the unanimous opinion of the painters of various nationalities, all else seemed painting, this alone truth."

The success of this portrait opened to Velasquez the doors of the Roman Academy of St. Luke.

Pareja is shown in half-length. The frizzled hair, the out-turned lips and depressed nose, display the African type. But the bold eyes and the whole pose of the man suggest more the hidalgo of Spain than anything of the servant. No doubt he was well aware that his features were to be scanned by the leading critics of Rome, and this reflection may have lent a certain haughtiness to his air. Doubtless, too, he felt the honour of being painted by Velasquez, even, as in this case, as a *corpus*

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vile, on whom the artist was to get his hand back into practice. And it was surely creditable in Pareja to wish to sustain his master's reputation, and so cause people to exclaim, "If this is the colour-grinder, what must the artist be?"

In the Madrid Gallery is a picture painted by Pareja of the *Calling of St. Matthew*, into which he has introduced his own portrait; only in this case he has softened some of the racial characteristics of his face. His pardonable vanity called for a slight departure from realism.

And now Velasquez, with the unanimous praise of the critics ringing in his ears, set to work upon his great portrait of Innocent.

Whatever may be said of this distinguished Pope, no one can claim that he possessed beauty. And any comeliness that may have been his in youth had long since departed, for when he granted a sitting to Velasquez he was in his seventy-fifth year, and in the last half decade of his long and laborious life. He could have been under no delusion either as to how Velasquez would paint him. Not even for the Vicar of Christ was the great Impressionist likely to change his style. Nor is there any reason for supposing that Innocent

wished him to do so. "Paint me as I am," he would probably have said, as Cromwell exclaimed to Lely. And this is what Velasquez has done; to such a degree indeed, that it is the real living man who gazes at us from the canvas. In the faces of those who have made history we have a right to look for something far nobler than mere beauty. The firmness of the mouth, the strength of the jaw, the massive build of the forehead, the keen, arrow-like glance of the eye—these are features which we expect in a leader of men. They not only do instead of artistic beauty—they not merely take its place, but their virile strength would become almost impaired and diluted and insipid by its presence.

Such features we discover in Innocent as he comes down to us from the brush of Velasquez. It is the face of a statesman and a ruler, of one who has laboured and suffered, who has tasted sorrow and disappointment. With such characteristics there dwells, as we should expect, a tone of severity in the mouth and brow. And yet we can readily picture that grave face lighting up in a smile of amusement; for a wonderful mingling of humour and austerity lurks in the vivid eyes, and we are not surprised to read of Innocent indulging in play-

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fulness, on the very page which chronicles the strong, resolute acts which distinguished his government as Head of the Church and as a temporal ruler.

In the special art of what may be called Soul-painting Velasquez was pre-eminent. His portraits are not mere masks. A mask, indeed, may accurately reproduce the features ; so also may the plaster-cast of a dead face—and no one could complain that the likeness was absent. But in a mask or a cast the psychological element is entirely wanting. Some speculations as to a dead man's natural gifts of head or even heart might be based on an examination of his plaster-cast. But of his soul not a hint would be given.

The truth of this proposition is strikingly and cogently illustrated by a comparison of the physical features of two distinguished men whose psychology was as far asunder as the poles, namely Jean Baptiste Vianney, the Curé of Ars, and Arouet de Voltaire. The facial resemblance between the two was wonderful, and their plaster casts would be nearly identical. But no portrait-painter worthy of the name would have been content to let the one man sit for the other ; and this for the simple reason that a real portrait is something far

deeper than a superficial representation. It is the picture not of a face, but of a man ; not of a mask, but of a soul. And in this psychological delineation Velasquez excelled.

We have already seen that his portrait of Innocent was no easy task. But there were causes beyond those already named which added to the difficulty. For one thing Justi tells us that the artist could only have seen the Pope at a distance, or during an audience ; and that the real study of his features " must have been made during the brief interval that he was permitted to stand at his easel in presence of His Holiness."

Then came the difficulty of *colour*, which Velasquez has certainly confronted with the boldness of genius, the audacity which commands success.

To put the case baldly, the artist had to paint a man whose complexion was red, who was seated in a red armchair, surrounded by red tapestry, wearing garments and head-covering of red. This mass of gorgeous colour was heightened rather than relieved by the brilliant white of the surplice, while in the whole portrait there is scarcely a shadow. Of course the term "red" is one of very large scope, admitting of countless gradations, and the

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Pope's countenance was of a different hue from that of his robes and tapestry. But this fact did but little to facilitate the artist's task, seeing that the face which was to be the salient part of the picture was of course of a less striking and brilliant colour than its surroundings. And yet among the master's portraits this of Innocent holds perhaps the most distinguished place, while it eclipses those by other painters in the Doria Gallery.

No portrait-painter is ignorant of the difficulty presented by the representation of the hands. In one of the Philip portraits, and in one of his sacred pictures, Velasquez has given us "broad, white, finely moulded hands," but these never occur in his later work. He is generally content to cover them with gloves, or to represent the fingers clenched. In the portrait of Innocent he has paid special attention to the hands, bringing the right one into special prominence. The lefts holds a letter addressed to the Pontiff, the inscription on which reads as follows: "Alla Sant^{ta} di Nro. Sig^{re}: Innocencio X. Per Diego de Silva Velasquez de la Camera di S. Mt^a. Catt^{ca}."

The right hand was at first more bent than we now see it, and it is possible to trace the

original position of the fingers. The left hand has also been touched up.

The excellence of the portrait was immediately acknowledged by the art critics of Rome, and it fully maintained the artist's already high reputation.

Palomino enthusiastically declares that "Our Velasquez came to Italy not to learn but to teach, for the portrait of Pope Innocent X. was the amazement of Rome ; all copied it as a study, and looked on it as a marvel."

Nor was this enthusiasm confined to the artist's own generation. Tonci, writing in 1794, calls the picture "a misfortune to all its neighbours, the glorious Guido among the rest (the Virgin worshipping the Child), appearing by its side mere parchment," while Sir Joshua Reynolds is said to have pronounced it the finest picture in Rome.

The only replica whose authenticity Justi will allow for certain is the well-known picture in the Duke of Wellington's collection at Apsley House, though writers seem to agree that Velasquez took back a copy of the portrait to Madrid. This was probably lost during the great war at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The triumph of this great portrait brought

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many commissions to the artist. The leaders of the great world of Rome vied with each other for the honour of sitting before his easel, and he must have lived laborious days to get through all that still remained for him to do.

He had to remember that his primary object in Rome was the collection of art treasures for Philip. This included the castings of thirty-two statues, "besides full-length figures and busts of many Roman effigies, together with the head of Michael Angelo's *Moses*."

With difficulty did Velasquez tear himself away from Italy. But Philip was beginning to be impatient for his return, and at last came a command from His Majesty which the artist could not disobey.

Taking ship at Genoa he reached Barcelona, after a disagreeable voyage, in the midsummer of 1651.

Philip was delighted at his friend's return and at the paintings which he had brought from Italy, and for the remainder of his life Velasquez was even more appreciated and honoured by his royal patron.

CHAPTER XI

ARTIST AND COURTIER

Velasquez appointed "Aposentador Mayor"—The various duties of his new office—Birth of Princess Maria Margarita, the child of Philip's second marriage—His Queen Mariana—Her portrait by Velasquez—His portrait of the Queen at prayer—The baptism of the infant Princess—A bull-fight—Velasquez's occupations and his intercourse with Philip—Velasquez's genius not limited to Impressionism.

VELASQUEZ'S return from his second Italian tour was marked by a "rise" of considerable importance in his position at the Spanish Court.

By way of recompense for his labours in Italy he was honoured by appointment to the post of "Aposentador Mayor," which, being interpreted, means Quartermaster-General of the King's Household.

The architects Herrera and Mora, in the reign of Philip II., had severally fulfilled this function now apportioned to our artist. Honour and glory apart, the position was not one to

call forth unmitigated envy. Its multifarious duties—often mere trifles heavy with ceremony—its superabundance of etiquette and rules of thumb, wound “red tape” by the yard about the person of the “Aposentador Mayor.”

Placing the King’s chair, removing the cloth when he dined in public (did Velasquez brush up the crumbs?), setting chairs for cardinals and viceroys, making arrangements for lodgement during royal progresses, etc., do not make up a list of duties very congenial, we should think, to an artistic temperament.

Velasquez as artist and Court functionary appears in these times a strange anomaly ; his responsibilities, and the calls upon his genius, an odd jumble of diverse aims to meet in one man for fulfilment.

This amalgam of æsthetics and “red tapeism,” however, though no sinecure, was a gilt-edged combination, not to be despised even by the soul of an artist, and artists are human after all. Velasquez’s salary ran to no less than three thousand ducats per annum ! Moreover, the key which hung from his girdle turned in every lock of the Palace.

On the 12th of July of the same year the Court was *en fête* to celebrate the birth of a princess, the first child of Philip’s second mar-

riage. Report affirms that before she ever saw her future husband in the flesh Princess Mariana fell in love with his portrait (by Velasquez?) in the Royal Gallery, Vienna, and declared that she would never marry anyone else "but her cousin with the blue feather."¹

Whether there was any foundation for such gossip it is impossible for us to affirm or deny. In nine cases out of ten royal marriages were more affairs of State than of affection; and a legendary element of romance may very possibly have been originated to supply the lack of the genuine article—to add, as it were, a poetic tinge to the prosaic prose of an alliance having international policy for a motive power.

Whatever the Princess Mariana's own feelings may have been, temptations to cynical doubts regarding the sentiments of Philip obtrude themselves willy-nilly when we are vis-à-vis with Velasquez's representations of the second Queen Consort. The unflattering realism of the artist leaves us hardly any alternative but to suppose that "the compass" pointed straight to the frigid pole of Policy instead of to the sunny latitude of Passion without any trembling in the balance. Dull eyes, full lips and cheeks (upon which the

¹ Sir W. Stirling Maxwell's *Velasques*.

rouge brush or hare's foot had left its gaudy impress), together with an unpleasing expression, do not contrast very favourably with the piquant charm of Queen Mariana's predecessor.

Her abundant fair hair might have gone far to redeem the situation, it is true. But, alas! it was bereft of its original beauty by the bizarre styles of "hair architecture" prevalent at Court. Plaited, frizzled, and tortured out of all semblance of nature, the toppling erection was made still more grotesque by garnishings of ribbons and feathers, accentuating its contortions. Surely the Venus di Milo would lose some of her classic prestige were she thus "guyed," and her form encircled by one of those immense hoops, deforming *les belles dames* of Velasquez's truthful canvas.

Perhaps the artist's picture of Philip's second consort, which, above all others, jars our sense of the fitness of things, is that of Queen Mariana at prayer! She kneels before an elaborately upholstered *prie-dieu* in a richly-curtained oratory, dressed in a tight-laced gala costume, a regular scaffolding of hair, ribbons, and gewgaws upon her head. The stiffness and conventionality of the whole conception is suggestive of a fashion-plate of the period,

its subject a bedizened fashion-doll rather than a woman at her devotions. The very uprightness of pose gives an impression that careful preservation of equilibrium is a necessary concomitant of the royal lady's ponderous hirsute "structure."

We are not surprised to hear that Queen Mariana's accomplishments were few. It is no wonder if brains ran to seed under the enervating influence, morally and mentally weakening, of an overwrought conventionalism and its stilted "laced-in" customs.

The baptism of the infant Princess (on July 25th) deserves special notice as an illustration of Velasquez's Court surroundings. The galleries of the Alcazar were turned into avenues of gold and purple drapery, through which a typically regal procession wended its stately way, the guards and courtiers *en grande tenue* gorgeous as a border of flaming poppies in their silks, satins, and uniforms.

Inside the chapel the splendour had crescendoed to fortissimo. Nothing had been spared in the way of ornate decoration. The walls were festooned with exquisite embroideries, while beneath a canopy of silver stood the font, the very one in which the great St. Dominic himself had been baptised.

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The Infanta Maria Theresa stood godmother, attended by her ladies-in-waiting, the babe being carried to the chapel in the arms of the Prime Minister, Don Luis de Haro.

At the doors the procession was received by the leading prelates of Spain richly vested. The Papal Nuncio, Cardinal Rospigliosi, administered the Sacrament of Baptism, giving the name of Maria Margarita, and hanging a precious relic round the child's neck.

From a raised daïs Philip looked down with lack-lustre gaze on the brilliant ceremony, his habitual apathy effectually masking any feelings he may have had. But the voice of the crowd without the gates gave vent to thunderous cheers as the Nuncio drove off in his coach, and sent an electric thrill of southern fire playing over the denser atmosphere of Court formalism.

After the lapse of a few weeks, when the Queen was once again able to take part in public festivities, a grand bull-fight took place by order of the King to commemorate her recovery. The Plaza Mayor was turned into a sort of Roman amphitheatre on such occasions by means of tier upon tier of balconies rising to the tops of the houses in the great square, to accommodate the immense throngs

collected to witness the national sport. And surely there could be no more appropriate "staging" for such a barbarous spectacle, with its horrors of blood, quivering animal agony, and its mangled holocaust of horses gasping life away in a sickening, untidy fashion on the sand.

Every detail of the programme was reminiscent of the arena, and befitted the perverted natures of the half-crazy Cæsars rather than the sovereign and populace of most Catholic Spain.

For Court "performances" the usual hired matadors were replaced by members of the *jeunesse dorée* of Madrid. These gallants entered "the ring" each wearing the colours or badge of his respective *innamorata*, like the knights of old. It suffices merely to mention such names as the Cid (Pedro Nino), the Emperor Charles V., Pizarro, and King Sebastian of Portugal, to show how ultra-fashionable active combat in the bull-ring had become.

Armed with lances, attended by grooms, and astride "mounts" very different from the deplorable hacks now offered in sacrifice to depraved taste, these young gallants cut a smart figure before assembled society when they rode into the improvised arena on their

fine thoroughbreds, resplendent in richly embroidered trappings. Certainly, if mere brute force and courage in a good or bad cause are worthy of admiration, the high-born matadors had ample cause for self-congratulation. Neither can it ever be a matter of indifference to face an infuriated bull let loose at close quarters within the limits of an enclosure, especially as the doomed beast was irritated and goaded to madness in order to secure a fierce show of fight on either side.

When the appetite for carnage was satiated by the despatching of an adequate number of bulls, an appendix to the programme took place in the shape of some mediæval fencing (the germ of modern military sports). This furnished the first pleasant or wholesome element in the proceedings, and was of Moorish origin.

Velasquez's time during the next few years seems to have been swallowed up by occupations and interests leading him away from his "Liege Lady" painting. The bronzes and marbles brought by the artist from Italy required classification, to say nothing of his own models which awaited casting in bronze or metal, this last process being superintended by the sculptor Ferrer.

The Italian articles of *vertu* were arranged in the galleries and halls of the Alcazar—already a perfect mine of treasures. Furthermore, the position of Quartermaster-General of the King's household meant ceaseless calls upon Velasquez's time, and was somewhat of a drag on the wheel of art. To be so actively engaged at Court (as an Aposentador Mayor) would have been considered by the generality of men as a profession in itself, exclusive of other avocations. But Genius, by a wizardry all its own, frequently contrives to fill every nook and cranny of life with achievement, and might well be credited with powers for prolonging time.

In his official capacity Velasquez was of course brought more than ever into personal contact with Philip IV. Possibly the secret recesses of the monarch's inner consciousness were rather empty after his life had been swept and garnished of Olivares. Be this as it may, the King often sought the society of the artist; conferring with him and confiding in him concerning momentous affairs of the nation. Whether such confidences were or were not rather a dangerous privilege, Velasquez flourished like a green bay tree all the same. Fate harried him not, while Fortune

smiled on him ; and never was he forced to fly for sanctuary from "brass-footed" Furies on his track, hastening to drive him to madness (?) and premature death, as in the case of the hapless Olivares !

Tranquil in his home life and favoured increasingly at Court, Velasquez's career forms a striking contrast to the less flowery paths of ordinary mortals ; "Grande Exception" writ large glimmered in letters of minted gold across its surface, while his person was protected from outside storms under the ægis of royal favour.

We have already commented on Velasquez's portraits of the Queen Consorts of Philip IV.—they were many. In addition to several paintings of Queen Mariana, the artist executed a small study of her on a circular silver plate, "about the size of a dollar-piece," Sir W. Stirling Maxwell says. The fact that the long impressionist brushes were thus laid aside in favour of the miniature painter's pencil, furnishes rather interesting proof as to the large capacity of genius, and leads us to believe that Velasquez was not perforce the slave of Impressionism. He rather *chose* to affect this particular style as being the best medium for the expression of his artistic

principles, although he could diverge from it at will, as in the instance of the miniature.

Hidden or manifest versatility is invariably the prerogative of genius—and often of only mere talent.

The possession of certain traits of character does not necessarily result in corresponding outward manifestation. It is when a man's psychology tends to external vent, that his attributes and defects are brought forth into the light of day, and the mysteries of complexity are unveiled. Nevertheless, the workings of psychic force which follow any such "unveiling" bring penalty in their wake. No sooner does man externalise his inmost nature, than he likewise becomes subject-matter for the study of Spiritual Pathology. In the world-wide museum of humanity his attributes or defects are exposed for public scrutiny; his health or malady of soul are topical questions for scientific treatment. Happy "the subject" whose portion consists in the healing nostrums of sympathy, instead of the cold steel of the dissector's knife.

Velasquez was not what is called a versatile man; but, surely only because he elected to give free play to certain dominating canons of Art, peculiarly adapted to convey the utter-

ances of his realistic creed to the universe of Æstheticism, and this to the exclusion of extensive developments elsewhere.

Imagination varies in species according to the ground whence it springs, and is by no means always "a climber"; it can, moreover, parallel the course of the wind blowing out of the east, and fly low, gathering earth germs in its current, together with the odours of the grass and of the flowers.

CHAPTER XII

THE PALACE LADIES

“Las Meninas”—Velasquez’s choice of subjects—Details of his picture “Las Meninas”—The costume of royal Spanish ladies. Their occupations—The “vital force” of “Las Meninas”—Velasquez’s later pictures—The occupations of his later years.

THE year 1656 brings us to the consideration of Velasquez’s masterpiece—“Las Meninas” or “The Maids of Honour.”

The title alone certainly does not speak for itself, neither does the subject seem to promise much scope for a *coup de main* of genius. But it is only another illustration of the fidelity of the artist to Realism ; the attractions of anything and everything “real” and familiar were so strong for a temperament cast in our artist’s mould that he was naturally at his best when dealing with any object which happened to cross his path in everyday life—instead of requiring to kindle genius at the brazier of some burning emotion.

Of "impressions" there were plenty, he contended, ready to hand in the Court, the market-place, the high-road, or the hotel. Lights and shadows fall across the homely fields and woods, and even a common smithy affords Rembrandtesque effects.

To attain artistic renown by no means involves aims and objects of a "tremendous" nature ; to acquire immortal fame we are not obliged to undertake hydraulic efforts after the superlative. If ideals magnetise us by their psychic fascination, it does not follow that we need range through creation bewailing the loss of the beautiful, like another Orpheus in search of his Eurydice. With Velasquez the Ideal and the Real were one and the same thing, and therefore the song of "the World Soul," the voice of Nature, and the mystery of her empire over Humanity, filled the cup of his satisfaction to the brim.

Strenuous passions or heart-shaking crises in the great drama of life do not appear to have even so much as threatened the well-being of our artist. There is no reason to suppose that any flash-lights or danger-signals ever flared upon the tide of his affairs. Uniform surroundings were enough for him and his genius. Probably he was much more in

his element when painting "Las Meninas," or portraits of his royal patron, than he would have been in the delineation of scenes descriptive of vehemence and turmoil, wherein man, the microcosm, is pitted against the macrocosm in fell agony of strife. The Riddles of Destiny troubled him not. With Sophoclean grandeur, and colossal themes, he had no part nor lot.

Velasquez's picture of "Las Meninas," or "The Maids of Honour," is considered by art critics to be his greatest work; and to have the hall-mark of his own particular style of genius very deeply imprinted on it. Strictly speaking the painting is a portrait; and the little Infanta Maria Margarita is its *raison d'être*, for the remaining figures making up this striking *tableau vivant* are but satellites revolving round their central sun. At the time when the picture was painted, the Princess was only about five years old, but her costume might well (or ill!) have become a grown woman. The skirt of her gown reaches to the ground, and is stretched over a huge, ungainly crinoline—an effectual bar to any childish grace or exercise. The grotesque little figure is nearly as broad as it is long, and notwithstanding her being "the idol of

the Court," the child is bereft of the two supreme privileges of her years, *i.e.* spontaneity and naturalness. The scene is a long, somewhat gloomy apartment, in a part of the Palace known as the Prince's Quarter. On the right, Velasquez stands at his easel. He is engaged on a picture, but has momentarily suspended operations either to speak, or to take stock of his work. As central figure of the group, little Princess Maria Margarita stands in the middle of the room. A kneeling Menina is presenting a cup of water to "Her Royal Highness," while on the left another Maid of Honour (Dona Isabel de Velasco) drops a respectful curtsy. The dwarfs Maria Barbola and Nicolas Pertusano are in the foreground; their weird personality seeming to testify to the truth of Justi's remark, that "beauty and deformity were alike at the beck and call of one who might well be termed 'the chief orb of her sphere.'" For in accordance with Court etiquette in the Spain of that day, the royal ladies were securely hedged in, by a labyrinth of conventionality, from anything like contact with the outside world. One of their principal outdoor recreations, we are told, consisted in paying visits to wealthy convents in sedan chairs, and this is merely one example

of the constrained pattern of the woof and web of their life's tapestry.

Perhaps the strain of Orientalism inherent in the physical and moral constitution of Spanish life and custom is never more noticeable than in its relationship to women, especially in the history of bygone centuries. The remaining *dramatis personæ* of this domestic scene from Court life, are a Lady of Honour, clad in nun-like habit, conversing with a State official. And at the far end of the apartment, the Queen's Aposentador, Don Josef Nieto, is to be seen going up a staircase on the other side of an open doorway. Close to this door a mirror hangs on the wall, and upon its surface are reflected the faces of the King and Queen; their "portraits" being thus supplied, although they themselves are out of the range of vision. Indeed, they are seated in the place which the spectator occupies in looking at the picture.

The painting is not characterised by local colour so much as by the light and shade which dominate the whole scheme. Owing to their manner of grouping, the perspective varies for nearly every one of the nine figures composing the *tableau*. These are modelled in accordance with the play of light and shadow

about their persons. A "chief orb of her sphere," the Infanta is naturally the focus of fullest brightness ; a brightness which gleams on the white satin of her dress, and radiates back upon her blonde complexion.

The figures are broadly touched in, their lifelike appearance being imparted to them by a few sharp strokes of the brush. The unblended superposition of dark and light, light and dark, in the picture is, we believe, the key to its wonderful vital force. Indeed, to describe it as essentially "vital" conveys the best idea of its influence on the beholder. At first sight it has an ultra-Rembrandtesque appearance of gloom and sombre obscurity, relieved by luminous tones here and there ; but as we stand before it, lo and behold ! the darkness clarifies and the canvas becomes instinct with life and movement, the colours "assert themselves" and the figures appear as though seen in a mirror, their outlines fairly aquiver with motion. The work has been in turn compared to "Nature seen in a camera obscura" (Wagen), and to "an anticipation of Daguerre's invention" (Stirling Maxwell), while the teaching of Leonardo da Vinci relative to "relief" being "the soul of painting" has never been more perfectly illustrated than through the

medium of Velasquez's "Maids of Honour" (Las Meninas).

The colour-tones of the picture are manipulated so as to lead up to what may be called its most resonant note, namely, the fair-haired, blue-eyed, little Infanta, with the light gleaming on her white satin-clad figure. She seems as though detached from the canvas, in such bold relief does she stand out, and the beholder might well be forgiven a "wide-awake dream" of her stepping over the picture-frame to tread the familiar halls and galleries of the Alcazar!

Some of the figures in the group are wrapt in gloom; others are *between* any atmospheric extreme of light or shadow, while the clearness of the sunlight where it falls gives a silhouetted appearance to the forms thrown up against its luminous setting. The varying effects of light, and the gradations of shade and colour, by which the artist has recorded to the world a mere fleeting "impression" (seized ere it passed with the hour that gave it) show how wonderfully "alert" he was to the ever-alternating phases of the surrounding *chiaroscuro*, and how truthfully his genius assimilated all such influences before he handed them on to future generations by the magic of his art.

The painting is executed on coarse canvas,

and the long bristly brush has done its work with impetuous Herrera-like speed, in haste to dash off the impression which the situation afforded. None but an artist can completely comprehend the extent of the technical difficulties with which Velasquez had to grapple, owing to the *lighting of the apartment* in his "Las Meninas." Three windows and an open door speak for themselves, and to have surmounted such obstacles with the consummate skill of our artist is a lasting tribute to the rare quality of his genius.

Sir W. Stirling Maxwell tells us that Luca Giordano called the "Meninas" the Theology, or Gospel of Painting. This expression tickled the ears of the art critics of his age (reign of Charles II.) and became such a favourite term of description that it is still in use to-day.

So gratified was Philip IV. with the work on its completion, that report affirms that he caught up a brush and with his own hand painted the Red Cross of Santiago on the figure of Velasquez in the picture, remarking that such an insignia was the one thing wanting to complete the perfection of the group! To modern taste the removal of the Meninas' hoops is another very definite (though unrealisable) "want." Velasquez's immortal

maids lose much of their charm owing to their envelopment in the hideous *guardanfante*, or huge oval crinoline, perversely and aggressively *de rigueur* in the age when Dona Isabel de Velasco was a reigning beauty. Some idea of the "enormity" of the *guardanfante* may be gathered when we quote that "the robes of a dowager might have curtained the tun of Heidelberg." Nevertheless, fashion's vagaries allowed for, the girlish faces of the Meninas are exceedingly pretty. The dwarfs of the party are good foils, moreover; even the tawny hound lying at the feet of Nicolasito Pertusano looks stately and dignified in comparison with the poor little mannikin, in whom human nature is so sadly awry. Early in the nineteenth century an original sketch of "Las Meninas" was owned by the poet and statesman Jovellanos.

The Infanta Maria Margarita—the centre of attraction in this world-renowned achievement of Velasquez's genius—was frequently painted by the artist during the ensuing years. The Queen of Spain's Gallery contains a full-length representation of the Princess, and a sparkling, animated portrait in the Louvre is, in M. Viardot's words, "one of the most popular pictures in the long gallery."

The last works known to have been executed by Velasquez are full-length portraits of the Infanta Maria Margarita and her young brother Don Philip Prosper, ere death so summarily cut short *his* brief career. In the picture of the Infanta, the artist has painted an ebony and bronze clock, while in that of the Prince a little white dog has been introduced. The creature was a pet of the artist's and looks very wide awake and well-conditioned, its ears pricked at full cock of "attention."

From the year memorable for the production of Velasquez's great masterpiece (1656) until the close of his artistic life, the time of the Court-Painter was principally absorbed by "official" occupations, leaving him but scant margin of leisure for quiet hours in the privacy of his studio. In the same year that Velasquez painted his "Meninas" he was engaged by his royal patron to overlook the disposal of a number of pictures in the Escorial. This collection numbered forty-one pieces. Some among them had been bought and brought over from the Whitehall Gallery; others the artist had purchased on behalf of Philip during his Italian sojourn; others again were gifts from the Count of Castrillo (ex-Viceroy of Naples) to the King of Spain. After the whole collection had been

deposited safely in the Palace Convent, Velasquez made an exhaustive list, embellished by annotations giving details of the history and antecedents of each picture, together with criticisms as to their merits and other interesting matter. This catalogue is said to have been of great assistance to Fray Francisco de los Santos in his descriptive treatise on the Escorial.



INFANTA MARGARITA [THERESA]

UNIV.
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tion of Velasquez's ultra-impressionist works requires much understanding to be brought to bear on them, and that they are full of possibilities for discovery in the realms of art.

For the study and due comprehension of such paintings the right distance between spectator and canvas is a *sine quâ non*. At close quarters vehement Impressionism appears little more than a chaos.

But when we step back the result is magical. The colours disentangle ; the various relations between tones, lights, and shadows are seen to be perfectly adjusted, while figures or objects in high-relief seem to be embossed or raised from the background. In short, the canvas becomes animated by an apparently "living picture"; the Rembrandtesque gloom of its atmosphere suggesting the idea of a dusky chamber as *mise en scène* for the artistic drama. Stray gleams and high lights, falling here and there, though they enliven the sombre harmony with a brighter, more piercing note, do but serve by contrast to enhance the effect of depth and remoteness, characterising the shadowy recesses of a certain class of Impressionist creations.

The wonderful *vitality* of Velasquez's style is strikingly apparent in his "Las Hilanderas," or

"The Spinners." In the catalogue of the Madrid Gallery it is entered as "La Fabrica de tapices de Santa Isabel de Madrid, cuadro llamado de las Hilanderas." The exact date of its production is uncertain, and nothing can be found in the royal archives of Spain to afford a clue to the settlement of the question. The opinions of authorities in matters of artistic import variously incline to the years 1652, 1660, and 1656. The picture represents a workroom occupied by a group of women busily engaged on their craft. In the background a second room opens out of the first, divided from it by an archway, through which are to be seen high-born dames, who as visitors are inspecting a finished piece of tapestry; its mythological subject is illuminated by a flood of sunshine. In the foreground the atmosphere is one of warm, transparent shade, indication of the intense heat of the outer air. The spinners have even discarded portions of their clothing under stress of the stifling air of the interior. All the group are at work upon some task, repairing or winding wool. At the spinning-wheel a handsome old woman plies her distaff. On the left of the picture a young girl is drawing back a large red curtain, while the remainder of the group are severally engrossed

in carding and winding skeins. The scene is simple to a degree ; but it was just those familiar fragments of life's varied patchwork that Velasquez loved to seize upon for the subject-matter of his genre pictures. We feel in the instance of "Las Hilanderas" that the artist's aim was not so much the representation of the spinners as such. He seems rather to "tear the heart out" of a fleeting impression reflected on his own mental vision from Nature's vast panorama. His ears were ever open to the message of the hour, and his eyes to the *tout ensemble* of actual surroundings ; under the influence of the ceaseless ebb and flow of the encompassing atmosphere, the ripple of its waves of light, its shadows, and its intersecting currents and counter-currents. In "Las Hilanderas" reality has been so faithfully portrayed that the figures of the women appear to move with the rhythmical vibrations of their aerial environments. The luminosity of the hot air filling the workroom is deadened towards the centre by a great blot of shadow, while an infinity of minute atmospheric particles float in the sunshine wherever it illuminates the scene. The rays of brightness appear iridescent owing to reflection from the diverse colour-tones ; and although their tints cross and

recross each other, the effect is one of perfect harmony; thus the contrasting notes of the picture mutually enhance their individual force. For instance, the rich red of the curtain, bathed in shadow, accentuates the relief of the lighter flesh tones of a bare shoulder, or the nape of a neck, glistening with moisture from the heat. In short, art has never before successfully produced such an extraordinary semblance of reality. And be it noted that the whole scheme is carried out with merely four or five colours, the genius of Velasquez's manipulation accomplishing the magical result.

During the next few years we hear of no more pictures from the hand of Velasquez. Officialism had him fast in its toils, and the years 1658 and 1659 were occupied by the tasks of an overseer rather than in labours congenial to the artistic temperament. Velasquez was first busy designing works for Colonna and Metelli, previous to presiding over their subsequent execution. The Duke of Terranova was his coadjutor (as Intendant of Royal Works). The following year found our artist once more at the Escorial superintending the erection over the altar of the Pantheon of a fine marble crucifix carved by Tacci the sculptor.

Though in the thick of his multifarious duties as Court official, Velasquez was not too much absorbed to prevent his thoughts turning in the direction of Italy again. Yearnings for that paradise of artists obtruded themselves whenever he found breathing-space to give himself up to contemplation of the objects in the background of his consciousness.

For him that mysterious region of subjectivism was naturally filled by shapes and phantoms of æsthetic creation, which raised supplicating hands of importunate longing before his mental vision, and refused to lie fallow at the back of the subconscious self. Further, it is by no means an unlikely supposition that the artist began to feel the tedium of "the daily round and the official task" rather burdensome. A treadmill is none the less a treadmill for being carpeted with velvet pile; the wires of a cage are no less effectual as bars against liberty from the fact that they are gilded. Neither is royal patronage without its drawbacks.

When a monarch has a "favourite" on the string he is within his rights if he gives that string a twitch back just as the subject attached thereto is preparing to flap his wings preparatory to a temporary flight.

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So it proved in the case of Velasquez. Philip no sooner saw signs of a flutter than he promptly and effectually "wound in the string" by refusing to accord permission for the absence of his Aposentador. Visions of Italy were thus eclipsed for our artist.

The October of 1659 was marked by the arrival in Madrid of the French Ambassador (the Maréchal Duke of Grammont) on matrimonial negotiations intent, concerning an alliance between the Infanta Maria Margarita and Louis XIV. of France. In an age of somewhat sensational display there was nothing startling in the theatrical entrance of the Ambassador upon the stage of contemporary affairs in Spain. Attired in the fantastic garb of couriers, the Maréchal and his suite galloped into the Palace vestibule—a picturesque episode typical of the eagerness of the royal suitor.

To Velasquez was deputed the task of conducting the French Ambassador and his sons over the Alcazar, and showing them its innumerable art treasures. Grammont likewise made a tour of inspection of the private galleries of the wealthy nobility. One of the best collections was owned by the Count Onate, who had lately brought back with him from Naples an

abundance of artistic purchases. The French Ambassador was evidently appreciative of his guide, for we hear that on his departure from Madrid he presented Velasquez with a gold watch.

Soon after these events the artist received formal permission to wear his Cross of Santiago. By a rescript of June 12th, 1658, the Habit of the Order had been already conferred, and Velasquez had duly handed in his pedigree, as required, to the Marquess of Tabara. There seems, however, to have been some subsequent hitch regarding the document in question, for we hear of an application to Pope Alexander VII.; but it was not until October, 1659, that the desired response was obtained. Meanwhile Philip chafed at the protracted delay; he summoned Tabara, ordered him to bring with him the documents relative to the affair, and told him to record the royal satisfaction with the existing evidence to hand. The 28th of November found the patent made out, and Velasquez was installed without loss of time as a Knight of Santiago. It was St. Prosper's Day—a red-letter day for the Spanish Court as being the birthday of the Prince of the Asturias. The ceremony of our artist's installation in his knighthood was performed in the Church of

the Carbonera ; the Marquess Malpeca acted as sponsor, and introduced him, while Don Gaspar Perez de Guzman, Count of Niebla, and heir of Medina Sidonia, invested him with the insignia of the Order. There is no doubt that the state of affairs at this epoch—namely, the peaceful relations between Spain and France, together with the forging of the matrimonial link between the two countries—increased Velasquez's Court duties to a serious degree, doubling his responsibilities and exhausting his energies. If the artist's avocations had already attained to full measure, they were now "pressed down and running over," so much so that for him the result was equal to a shake of his hour-glass from an unseen hand, making the sands of time run down with augmented speed. In plain English, his life was shortened, and those who come after cannot but regret the ultimate issue of that blending of courtier and artist exemplified in the career of Velasquez.

In the year 1660 a meeting took place between the Courts of Spain and France to celebrate the marriage of Louis XIV. and the Infanta. It was summer-time, and a spot known as the Isle of Pheasants (on the River Bidassoa) was chosen as the scene of the event. By the

French it was considered "neutral ground," but Spain laid claim to it on the strength of the allegation that a divergence of the river from its course had separated it from Pelayo. To-day the encroaching waters of the stream have pretty nearly settled this contention in their own way, having left but little more than a sedgy fragment of what was once the famous historic isle.

Before the date fixed for the royal nuptials, Velasquez was told to go on ahead in order to make and to superintend arrangements, and to set on foot vast preparations for the forthcoming pageant. He proceeded with all possible despatch to the Bidassoa, where he prepared the Castle of Fuentarrabia, and superintended the erection of a pavilion. These preparatory duties accomplished, Velasquez spent two months at San Sebastian inspecting his works and waiting for the arrival of the kings.

In the age of Philip IV. the Pheasants' Isle extended to 500 feet in length and 70 in breadth, a great contrast to its present diminutive proportions. Some idea of the Aposentador's heavy responsibilities may be gathered from a mental inspection of the pavilion, or *pavilions*, more properly speaking. The planning and

superintendence of such an erection were indeed no light task. The length covered was 300 feet of ground. In the middle stood a Hall of Conference, from which diverged wings containing each a suite of apartments for the accommodation of the two monarchs, the Kings of Spain and of France.

An entrance portico on each front of the pavilion was joined by a covered way leading down to the bridge of boats, by means of which the royal approach from the respective territories was to be effected. The Hall of Conference itself was 56 feet long by 28 wide and 22 high; the chief apartment flanking it on either side being no less than 40 feet long by 18 wide, while all the rooms measured 18 feet from floor to ceiling.¹

The decoration of these chambers was sumptuous in the extreme, gilding and costly arras galore, and though Velasquez as *Spanish Aposentador* only overlooked the fitting-up of the King of Spain's suite, the ornamentation, hangings, and other decorations were carried out on a uniform scale throughout the whole edifice.

¹ Sir W. Stirling Maxwell.

CHAPTER XIV

FRANCO-SPANISH PAGEANTS

The Royal Pavilion on the Island of Pheasants—National characteristics displayed in the ornamentation—Velasquez's labours—Journey of the Court to Fuentarrabia—Philip's immense retinue—Receptions and pageants ~~on~~ *en route*—Meeting between Philip and his sister—The Franco-Spanish Court—Velasquez's appearance on this occasion—The brilliancy of the festivities—the Court returns to Madrid.

ALTHOUGH the decoration of the Royal Pavilion was uniform in splendour, the diverse characteristics of the two nations, whose monarchs were to occupy parallel suites of apartments in that edifice, were discernible in the style of ornamentation and embellishment displayed by the representatives of Spain and France in their preparations for the coming of the kings. It is interesting to note the indications of national temperament displayed thereby, and to contrast the grave and more serious Spanish character with the vivacity and brilliance of French gaiety.

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The apartments in which Velasquez was the presiding genius were hung with arras representing subjects more or less sacred ; in the very precincts of regal blaze and pageantry the Aposentador bore himself in his own dignified and stately fashion. The French, on the other hand, delighted to adorn their side of the edifice with fabrics picturing Hellenic or Roman myths, together with scenes culled from the creations of Ovidian fantasy.

Was it not another of life's numerous little ironies that such Paganism should have flared unabashed next door to representations of Noah's Ark and Apocalyptic visions?

But the hard-pressed Aposentador had much to consider besides art tapestries, gold tissues, and such-like accessories. His labours were unfortunately full of the prosaic business of upholstery, carpentry, and so on, entailing long hours of wearisome drudgery in attention to work far more suitable to the foreman of a furnishing establishment than a painter ! To add to Velasquez's already heavy tasks he had to seek and find adequate accommodation for Philip and his Court all along the route from Madrid. Despite the assistance of Villarael—one of Velasquez's deputies—and Mazo Martinez, this meant exhaustion alike of brain and

energy for the Aposentador; for the King's mode of procedure was very different from modern royal travelling, Philip's entire "following" being of an oriental description.

On the 15th of April the King began his journey after solemnly making his will and invoking the protection of Our Lady of Atocha. The Infanta accompanied him, and his "train" consisted of three thousand five hundred mules, eighty-two horses, seventy coaches, and seventy baggage waggons. The luggage of the intended bride was something prodigious. The contents of her wardrobe itself filled twelve great chests, and such was the passion for display in that ostentatious age, that even packing-cases were encased in red velvet and mounted in silver.

Twenty more trunks—of morocco this time—held her linen and other things; while the apparatus of her "toilet requisites" (as the perfumers name these mysterious adjuncts of feminine adornment) laden fifty weary mules! Moreover, in addition to her actual personal impedimenta, the Infanta brought with her a lavish assortment of gifts to be bestowed when the two Courts met at the end of their respective journeys.

Strange items figured in the list of these

royal souvenirs ; amber gloves, whisker-cases (to be worn on retiring to rest!), and old-world inventions, only to be found nowadays in collections from the obsolete gimcracks of a dead-and-gone epoch of civilisation. The existence of whisker-cases shows that the spirit of formalism haunted the nights, as well as walking in the noonday ; and much might be written concerning the fashions and customs of Spanish high-life in the age of the fourth Philip. It seems to have been the pride of royalties and grandees to emulate each other in the number and the magnificence of their retinues. That of Philip trailed out to an incredible length. The vanguard of his cavalcade sounded their trumpets before the gate of Alcala de Henares, simultaneously with the exit of the rearguard from Madrid ; while the progress through Burgos and Vittoria was worthy of chronicle in an Arthurian romance, so picturesque was it in its pomp and revelry.

The journey was repeatedly broken by the royal travellers in the palaces of nobles and hidalgos, such as the Mendozas and the Velascos, who flung money right and left with open-handed prodigality in the entertainment of their guests. Prelates received Philip at

the doors of ancient cathedrals ; abbots and priors came out from their monasteries, bearing their most treasured relics for the benefit of the King ; the citizens of Mondragon accorded him a military welcome, rendered all the more impressive by its display of the historic arms which had seen service in the days of Pedro the Cruel. We also hear of weird national dances performed in semi-barbaric style before His Majesty, and we need hardly add that the standing dish in the *menu* of Spanish amusements, namely bull-fighting, figured largely in the day's work, while fireworks blazed against the velvety darkness of night. The slowness of the King's advance *en route*, all his dallying to cull the pleasures which the moments afforded by the road-side, are in odd contrast to modern notions of travelling. And when we hear that Philip and the Infanta let three weeks elapse at San Sebastian alone, we are tempted to think of a snail's passage along a garden path towards a bed of violet leaves. How different the somnolent atmosphere of old Spanish cities *themselves*, from the pressure of life in this epoch of electricity, technical invention, and progress ! Surely the *shade* of stately Philip IV. would vanish in shuddering amaze-

ment were he suddenly called forth into the swirl of twentieth-century life !

It was not until the 2nd of June that the Spanish Court arrived at Fuentarrabia ; the French King and the Queen-Mother having already reached the frontier town of St. Jean de Luz. Proceedings opened by the formal abjuration of any right of succession to the Crown of Spain on the part of the Infanta, and before the next day was over the royal bride was wedded by proxy—Haro acting as the representative of the real bridegroom, the King of France. Velasquez's pavilion was now in full requisition ; on the 4th of the month, it was the scene of a private interview between the royal relatives of Spain and France.

Although Philip had not seen his sister, the Queen-Mother, for years numbering nearly a lifetime, stiffness dominated natural impulse, and he did not even so much as exchange a kiss with her, which shows how case-hardened feelings and affections can become under the petrifying influence of a conventional tyranny. But though the iron heel of social etiquette grinds down its victims with persevering energy from one period of history to another, suppression is by no means synonymous with extinction. The more untrue to nature the modes of social

intercourse become, the more surely will feelings and instincts, which are harmless in the light of day, generate moral poison when crushed and stifled in secret hiding-places. Probably Philip's private irregularities could, one and all, be put down to the artificiality which hedged him round with its labyrinthian intricacies. Unnatural and unnecessary laws and canons, if not ignored on the house-tops of publicity, will, in nine cases out of ten, incite outraged nature to rebellion behind locked doors, with results provocative of a *Rabelaisian* peal of laughter from the powers of evil.

While King Philip and his sister were condoling with one another on the adversities of the past years and exchanging experiences, Louis and his bride caught a glimpse of each other at last. There is something very comic in the fact that this recognition was accomplished through the crack of a door ajar! Why they might not meet face to face and "above-board" is a conundrum we are unable to answer.

The next day, however, the royalties assembled in the Conference Hall, when the Kings of Spain and France solemnly ratified all previous negotiations and agreements.

A Franco-Spanish Court was held, the presentation of the French nobles being performed by that notable personage Cardinal Mazarin; while the Castilian hidalgos were in their turn introduced by Haro to King Louis. It subsequently fell to Velasquez's share to be the bearer of the truly regal souvenirs, presented by his son-in-law to Philip IV., and on the 7th of June the two Courts again met for farewells; and on this occasion the King of Spain said good-bye, for ever, to his daughter and sister (the Queen-Mother of France).

So far, as regards these pages, the half has not been told concerning this memorable week on the banks of the River Bidassoa. The scene would best be pictured by those "rhetoricians of mundane pomp,"¹ the Venetian painters, with their wealth of glowing colour and triumphant splendour, as a medium of description. Further, the actors upon the stage of this historic drama made up the *dramatis personæ* of immortal celebrity in European chronicles.

Though Philip IV. had now been forty years on the Spanish throne, time had dealt very gently with his outward man, and he bore no rough finger-marks of its handling, no lines

¹ J. A. Symonds.

and scorings from the pencil of its recording memories. His air of pride and impassive stateliness remained the same as of old. Probably his lethargic temperament had no small share in such an indemnity from the impress of past years. To a man of Philip's mental calibre, life could never be a very tempestuous affair. The years might run out, while opposing powers tore each other to pieces in the arena of European policy; loss might alternate with gain, in love and war, at home and abroad; and yet no lurid lightning of passion would so much as singe a hair of his head. If the faint-hearted man dies a thousand deaths—much more does the ardent man “live a thousand lives.” Louis XIV., who had not as yet reached the *l'État c'est moi* epoch of his career, was only on the threshold of his reign at this period and in the heyday of his youth and strength.

The two queens, both Austrians by birth, were long past the morning of life's day; the shadows of an existence more or less chequered and soul-chilling, had effectually darkened and cooled the glow of high noon. Cardinal Mazarin's penetrating glance cast the search-light of the diplomat upon contemporary events, and interpreted the writing between the lines of

present policy in a favourable manner—conducive to the glory of his Eminence and his country. Haro¹ was there; Turenne and Marshal Villeroy, but we need enumerate no more, suffice it to remark that the gathering was made brilliant by the foremost men of the day in company with representatives of the *haute noblesse* of Spain and France. A noticeable figure in this throng of celebrities was Diego Velasquez himself. The Aposentador had now left all traces of youth far behind him, it is true; still, he was at no disadvantage on that account, his picturesque head and fine figure were as good to look upon as ever. Nay, if anything, he appeared all the handsomer for the touch of time. Though the freshness of youth may have a certain poetry about it, it is none the less possible for such early charms to pall. The beauty of the sapling can well appear raw and flavourless when compared with the maturity of the sturdy forest tree, which has weathered the storm and shine of many seasons. Velasquez's silver-laced costume set off his entire person to the best advantage, and he looked "a very proper man," right worthy of all the numerous

¹ "The ablest Minister and worst Captain of Castile" (Sir Wm. Stirling Maxwell).

honours and distinctions which his royal patron had showered upon him. His Castilian ruff topped a shoulder-cape embroidered with the Cross of Santiago, while the insignia itself hung from his neck and gleamed with jewels. The sword at his side showed a hilt of elaborately chased silver above the finely wrought scabbard, and the Court-Painter was altogether an ornament to the scene enacted in his pavilion.

The festivities which took place in celebration of the marriage of the Infanta were fully up to the high-water mark of splendour then prevalent on great occasions in wealthy courts.

The blue, gold, scarlet, and yellow of French and Spanish uniforms gave the green sward the appearance of an animated parterre, when viewed from a distance; the River Bidassoa bore fairy-like gilded barges along its current, while the oars kept time to the strains of bewitching music, and cannon boomed and echoed among the hills from Fuentarrabia. Though the bright colours and daring fashions of the French made the darker Spanish toilets seem somewhat dead and dull, the jewels adorning the ladies of the Castilian Court more than made up for the way their gowns were built. Moreover, if the costumes of the grandees were rendered sombre by French vividness, the uni-

forms and liveries of the Spanish Guards and lackeys outshone those of France. The price of this gaudy lavishness has been estimated at forty thousand ducats. By the 8th of June Philip had sent for and received final tidings of the young Queen of France, and on the same day he left the Castle of Fuentarrabia on his return journey to the Spanish capital. This time the Aposentador was in attendance on His Majesty, the toilsome task of procuring lodgment for the different stages of the route being deputed to a substitute. After the royal cavalcade had left Burgos it struck out in a new direction, travelling *viâ* Valladolid, that ancient city where Philip first saw the light. Here several days were spent in the palace of his birth, while entertainments of every variety were provided for his amusement. Feats of prowess, bull-fights, dramatic representations, and the fantastic brilliance of a masquerade followed each other in hot haste. The strangest item in this very full programme of revels was, perhaps, the *Mogiganga*, a piece of mediæval drama of the most curious description. From the vantage ground of a balcony, Philip's stony stare rested on such characters as Gog and Magog, and a host of fabulous creatures—these dragons and wild beasts, careering in a bizarre medley, more

suggestive of some trick of a fevered imagination, or a dream of delirium, than a dramatic performance before royalty.

In an interval from masks, fencing, bull-fighting, and such-like diversions, the King went on foot to hear Mass in the splendid conventual church of St. Paul, where long years ago he had received baptism. He also offered up his devotions at the shrine of Our Lady of San Llorente. We may add *en passant*, that the gorgeous temple of St. Paul contained numerous masterpieces of Spanish local art—Valladolid apparently possessing a wealth of artistic talent in those days. Doubtless these æsthetic treasures were no small source of delight to Velasquez, as he familiarised himself with the creations of such men as Juni, Hernandez, and Becerra.

The 26th of the month found Philip once more in the bosom of his family, after a most prosperous and eventful journey to and from the famous "Isle of Pheasants," while to later generations the whole resplendent episode echoes through the ages like a triumphant fanfaronade of silver trumpets blazoning forth the dignity of the kingly office.

CHAPTER XV

SLAVE, DISCIPLE, AND SON-IN-LAW

Realism unsuited to mystical subjects—"The Coronation"—"St. Paul and St. Antony"—"St. Francis Borgia"—Velasquez's disciples—Juan de Pareja—He studies art secretly—His manner of revealing his talent—His picture, "The Calling of St. Matthew"—Curious divergence of opinion concerning this picture—Pareja as portrait-painter—Mazo Martinez.

THERE is something in the vivid realism of Velasquez which, however admirable in portraiture and landscape, tends to mar his sacred pictures if they are regarded from a religious, as distinguished from an artistic standpoint.

This remark holds good even in his "Adoration of the Magi" and his "Crucifixion," though these represent historical and material events. Its truth is more strongly realised, however, in his picture of "The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin," called in the old catalogues "La Trinidad." It is difficult to believe that the most ardent admirer of Velasquez, looking

at this picture, would assert that his genius was tuned to ecstatic or mystical themes such as the brush of Fra Angelico so exquisitely illuminated. To materialise a purely symbolic subject was really foreign to our artist's nature. The two other sacred pictures which we have just mentioned, though falling short of the highest devotional standard, are at least recognisable as scenes which were enacted in the world of matter, whereas the "Coronation" is purely mystical, being nothing more than a conventional representation of the sublime dignity to which the Mother of Christ was raised on her entrance into the Heavenly Courts.

From a devotional point of view the models seem to us unfortunately chosen. The cold, not to say haughty, expression on the face of the Blessed Virgin was no doubt copied from that of some Castilian lady, whom it exactly suited. But it strikes one as scarcely characteristic of the humble Queen of Heaven. Her attitude, too, though full of womanly dignity, is essentially dramatic rather than devotional, and since she is represented as throned instead of kneeling, her face is necessarily turned away from the Father and Son, Who are placing the crown upon her head.

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It is probably too late to quarrel with the habit which has such high artistic sanction, of representing the Eternal Father as an old and decrepit man ; but in this picture even the face of Christ, for which surely Velasquez could have found many passable models, is singularly unattractive.

What is probably the last picture on a sacred subject which Velasquez painted is necessarily free from the objection which we have ventured to bring against the "Coronation," for it represents an earthly scene. In "The Visit of St. Antony to St. Paul of Thebes" the artist was able to paint from models who could at least don the garments and assume the attitude of the original saints, while the landscape is also terrestrial. The work was executed for the Oratory in the Hermitage of St. Antony, and was originally honoured by a handsome gilt frame, which was not common at that period.

St. Paul the anchorite, had retired into the desert, where he dwelt for ninety years, forgotten by the rest of mankind. During sixty of these solitary years he had been fed by a raven who had brought him half a loaf each day for his sustenance. It had been revealed to Paul that on the eve of his death he should

receive a visit from a fellow-man, and now, when he has reached his hundred and thirteenth year, Antony appears. Thus he knows that his long life of penance and solitude is at an end.

Antony, on the other hand, when over ninety years of age, received a divine intimation that there lived a man in the desert more perfect than himself, and he was told how to reach the grotto where Paul lived.

Velasquez adopts a fashion very common in the art of the Middle Ages by showing, on the same canvas, various incidents of Antony's journey, and his final arrival at the entrance of the grotto. These are of course subordinate to the chief motive of the picture, as is also the representation of Antony wrapping the body of Paul in the cloak of St. Athanasius, which the anchorite had requested his visitor to fetch from his grotto.

In the foreground of the picture the two saints are seated near the foot of an alder tree. Paul recognises in the coming of Antony that his departure from this life is at hand. With outstretched arms, and eyes fixed upon heaven, his ascetic face lit up with the anticipation of eternal rest, the saint, worn out with fasting and toil, pronounces his *Nunc Dimittis*.

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Antony meanwhile gazes in wonder at the holy anchorite whom he has travelled so many weary miles to visit.

Paul's grotto is formed inside an enormous wall of rock which almost shuts in the foreground of the picture, though on one side is visible a far-stretching valley, through which a narrow rivulet winds, the view terminating in the distant sierra.

One can almost feel the scorching heat of the sun which beats down upon the valley, in spite of the light clouds which here and there fleck the sky.

Velasquez chose his scene from a Spanish rather than an African desert, a fact which certainly adds to the charm of the picture, if it departs from historic truth.

Above the heads of the saints is seen the faithful raven winging his flight to the earth; but this time he brings with him a whole loaf.

In many respects this is one of our artist's most wonderful productions. Of all his works it is, remarks Justi, "the most thinly painted . . . completely finished at the first dash, and then not touched again. All the effects are produced by the least expenditure of power and pigment. A few tints, chiefly blue and brown, are sparingly applied to a yellowish-

white ground, and by these economic means results are obtained which are now scarcely secured by endless glazing or the most liberal use of the spatula. But the most remarkable feature in this insubstantiality is the perfect distinctness of the forms, from the human figures down to the bramble-bushes. Behind the colours, which seem blown on to the canvas, the drawing quivers as if seen in the distance through a thin gauze veil."¹

A picture which ought not to pass without mention here is that of St. Francis Borgia, Duke of Gandia, which is usually ascribed to Velasquez. It represents the Duke dismounting from his horse at the gates of the Jesuit College. St. Ignatius stands to receive his distinguished disciple. Francis was a cousin of Charles V. and had held high position at Court. It fell to his lot to open the coffin of the Empress Isabella for the purpose of official identification, and the sight of corruption which death had already worked upon the body of one of the greatest personages on earth, so impressed the Duke with the hollowness and worthlessness of human glory that he resolved to retire to the cloister, and to join the newly

¹ *Diego Velasquez and his Times*, by Carl Justi. Translated by Professor Keane. London, 1889.

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founded Society of Jesuits. He spent many years in the Order, practising the most astonishing austerities, and was ultimately raised to the position of General of the Jesuits, being the third in succession to St. Ignatius.

The picture is in the Duke of Sutherland's gallery at Stafford House.

Of the disciples of Velasquez during his lifetime the most noted is Juan de Pareja, who was at one time his slave. We have already seen that he followed his master to Madrid in 1623, when he was seventeen years of age. And it is a tribute to the kindness of the artist that Pareja not merely stayed with him after his manumission, but became his scholar, and remained with him till the end. After the death of Velasquez he entered the service of his daughter, the wife of Mazo Martinez, and remained with her until his death.

Pareja's ancestors were slaves who had been imported into Spain by the Moriscos in the previous century. His portrait by Velasquez, painted in Rome, shows clearly the African type. The years which he spent in his master's studio aroused in him a strong love of art, and he used the opportunities of his position to practise it. Without breathing

a word as to the talent of which he gradually became conscious, the colour-grinder secretly copied the works of Velasquez, after carefully watching the great man's methods. His two visits to Italy were of the greatest help to him, and he neglected no opportunity of improving himself in his art. The manner in which he finally allowed himself to be known as a painter shows that he was possessed of a good deal of diplomatic tact.

He had painted a picture, putting into it his best work, and finishing it with the utmost care. This he hung up, with its face to the wall, in his master's studio. As so frequently happened, Philip paid a visit to the Court-Painter, and he immediately noticed the reversed canvas. His curiosity was aroused, and he asked to see the picture. It took the King's fancy and he inquired the name of the artist. Velasquez was as ignorant on this point as the King. Then Pareja, falling on his knees, acknowledged that the picture was his, at the same time asking pardon for his boldness in painting it without his master's knowledge. Philip forthwith declared that the man who could paint so well ought no longer to remain a slave. Pareja rose from his knees a free man, and Velasquez soon after presented

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him with his deed of manumission, and accepted him as his pupil. He was then in the forty-sixth year of his age.

In the Museum of Madrid is a well-known picture by Pareja, to which we have referred in a former chapter. It represents the Calling of St. Matthew. The artist has introduced no fewer than fourteen persons, some of whom are seated at the table where the business of the Customs is being carried on, while others are standing. Nearly all are looking up in amazement at the sudden entrance of the Saviour, Who, "as one having authority," calls His new disciple.

Pareja has depicted himself standing to the extreme left of the picture. In his hand is a paper bearing his name with the date 1661. He is the only one in the room whose eyes are fixed on the spectator. This attitude was probably difficult to avoid if he painted his own face from a mirror, but it has an unreal effect. With total disregard for historical accuracy, St. Matthew himself is habited in the costume of a Spanish or Italian knight of the seventeenth century, with plumed hat and large spurred boots. On the wall of the room hangs a large picture of the brazen serpent. The richly hued carpet which covers

the table, and the jewellery upon it, as well as the handsome vases on the window-sill, remind one of the Flemish school of art.

The work is distinctly a remarkable achievement. But it is a curious fact that two such authorities on art as Paul Lefort and Sir William Stirling Maxwell should differ diametrically as to its resemblance to the Velasquian style. M. Lefort writes as follows: "Cette toile, très rémarquable, ne rappelle en rien Velasquez. C'est une peinture hybride, mélange de vénitien, de génois, dont l'auteur semble avoir étudié de préférence Veronese et Castiglione plutôt que le peintre du tableau des *Lances*."

Whereas, if we are to adopt the judgment of Sir William, "it is . . . executed with a close and successful imitation of the colouring and handling of Velasquez."

Notwithstanding such a wide divergence of opinion as to this picture, there seems to be no doubt as to the possession by Pareja of one point of resemblance to his master; for he excelled as a portrait-painter. In the Hermitage Gallery in Russia there is a well-known picture by Pareja representing a monk or friar, and Palomino tells us of a portrait of Ratés, an artist, so admirably painted that many

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have attributed it to the brush of Velasquez himself.

Another disciple of our artist was Mazo Martinez, who curiously enough imitated his master not only in his art but in his marriage, for he became the son-in-law of Velasquez, just as Velasquez himself had, years before, acquired that relationship to his teacher Pacheco. He entered the studio of the great artist at an early age, and became extremely proficient, first as a copyist, and later as a painter of portraits. In the former capacity he reproduced works of Titian and Veronese so admirably that his copies were mistaken for the originals.

Of his portraits one of the best was that of Queen Mariana, and a notable landscape from his brush, now in the Royal Gallery, is a view of Saragossa, the foreground of which contains figures painted by Velasquez himself. The picture was executed by Philip's order.

Mazo Martinez probably owed his position of Deputy Aposentador to the influence of his father-in-law, and after the great artist's death Mazo succeeded to the post of Court-Painter.

His wife died, leaving him with two sons,

Gaspar and Balthasar (named after two of the Magi). They both held good positions at Court.

Mazo Martinez died in the Treasury at Madrid in 1687.

CHAPTER XVI

MURILLO AND OTHERS

Velasquez influences Italian art—His relations with Murillo
—Pupils of Velasquez—Carreno—Alfaro—The *Memoria*
—De Villacis—De Aguiar—"The Family of Velasquez"
—The question of its date.

WE observed in our opening chapter that Spanish art at the time when Velasquez was a student was profoundly affected by that of the Italian school. Before his life was over our artist had himself exercised a notable influence on the art of Italy. Even Roman painters adopted his manner and drew nearer to nature. Palomino indulged in no idle rhetorical flourish when he said that "our Velasquez" has come to Italy as a teacher rather than a disciple. The words were an unexaggerated tribute to his genius. The influence which he wielded, too, was more widely and effectually diffused, owing to the fact that he supervised many of the artistic works undertaken by Philip's order. We have already

mentioned two of Velasquez's pupils, but there is one man whose reputation is as widely spread and as greatly honoured as that of Velasquez himself.

One day a young man of twenty-four, tired out with his long journey from Seville, with thick black hair and weather-worn garments, arrived at Madrid. He directed his steps to the Alcazar, and asked to see the Court-Painter. This was the first meeting between Velasquez and Murillo.

Happily for art lovers of succeeding generations, Philip's Court-Painter possessed a more genial nature than many great and successful men. He had none of that odious form of jealousy which tries to repress the talents of those who threaten "to poach on one's preserves." On the contrary, he examined some of the young man's paintings, pointing out their deficiencies. He realised at once the limitations which had hitherto tended to stunt his visitor's genius. He explained the secret of "relief" as opposed to mere polychrome, and he showed him his early work, "The Water-carrier." The two years which Murillo spent in Madrid effected a radical change in his art. His fellow-townsmen were amazed on his return to Seville at the total transformation of

his style. It was not that he "imitated" Velasquez. In no sense could this be said by anyone who compares the pictures of the two men. But this visit to Madrid and the guidance of Velasquez made his art what it is. He came home from the capital with his genius tuned to the right key ; his conventionalism was a thing of the past, and the critics of Seville agreed that until then they had not realised what painting was.

No one who delights in the contemplation of a Murillo, should forget that he owes his pleasure to Diego Velasquez.

In the strict meaning of the word, however, our artist left no successor. His methods do not lend themselves to hard-and-fast rules, and though his influence was widespread, it was such as is imbibed by observation rather than taught in books.

Don Juan Carreno can scarcely be called a disciple of Velasquez, for he had formed his habits of art long before the two had met. But it was due to Velasquez that he resigned his position as Judge and ceased to be a mere amateur, painting whenever his duties afforded him the leisure to do so.

Velasquez engaged him for the decoration of the Alcazar, and under the great man's aus-

pices he executed several important compositions, chiefly on mythological subjects, in the Hall of Mirrors. In 1650 Carreno was appointed one of the King's painters, a preferment which was due in all probability to the request of Velasquez. In the succeeding reign he obtained important offices at Court. His portraits and frescoes are very numerous, one of the former class being his "Charles II." which hangs in the Museum at Madrid.

Carreno was a man of distinguished birth. He could have been made a Knight of Santiago had he cared to accept this dignity, but he refused, on the ground that to be His Majesty's servant was honour enough for him. He was urged by his friends to change his mind, but he replied, "Painting stands in no need of honours from anyone; she can afford to confer honour on the whole world."

Carreno died in 1685 at the age of seventy-two.

Another artist who came for some time under the influence of Velasquez was Juan de Alfaro y Gamez, who was born in 1640. He is chiefly of interest, so far as this book is concerned, from the fact that he printed a pamphlet which was written by Velasquez. By Philip's order Velasquez had charged himself

with the arrangement of the pictures which had been removed to the Escorial, and of these the artist wrote a *Memoria*, as he called it; or, to give the book its fuller title, a *Catalogue of the Pictures sent by the King to the Monastery of the Escorial in the year 1656*. Of this work Palomino remarks that the writer supplies details of the pictures, of "their excellence, history, authors, and on the place where they were hung, in order to explain them to His Majesty, and with so much elegance and propriety that the document is a proof of his learning and of his great judgment; for so important are these paintings, that properly speaking he alone could give them their due praise."¹

The *Memoria* lay hidden from the eyes of the world until 1871, when it was discovered in printed form. The imprint is "Roma, en la Oficina de Ludovico Grignano, ano de MDCLVIII. 16 B. 8°." which Justi says is spurious, Alfaro having invented it in order to save the time that would have been necessary if he had obtained an *Imprimatur*. The book is said to have been used in its manuscript form by Francisco de los Santos when writing

¹ *Velasquez and his Times*, by Carl Justi. Translated by Professor Keane, p. 382.

his *Description of the Escorial*, published in 1657.

It was to Alfaro that Palomino owed the manuscript notes which he used so largely in his work about various painters, and about Velasquez especially. Palomino was Alfaro's pupil, and inherited his master's papers.

Without Palomino's book our information about Velasquez would be extremely meagre.

Nicolas de Villacis, who was a native of Murcia, on showing remarkable talent for painting, was entrusted to the care of Velasquez. But after a time he determined to study in Rome, where he spent several years. He then returned to his native place where he worked as an amateur, just as the humour took him, refusing Velasquez's invitation to assist in the decoration of the Alcazar. Palomino describes him as a great artist, basing his opinion among other works, upon his frescoes in the convent of the Trinity in Murcia. Of these we are no longer able to judge, as they were destroyed by damp early in the last century.

Another of Velasquez's pupils, de Aguiar, who flourished about the time of his master's death, was known as a portrait-painter. One of his works was a picture of Antonio Solis,

the poet, who in return thanked the painter in a sonnet. This little poem is so happily expressed, its compliments are so deftly turned, that it has largely contributed to Aguiar's immortality. After praising the portrait for its marvellous resemblance to the original, the poet adds, "Truly, if this picture lacks speech, that only adds to the likeness ; for I myself stand speechless and amazed at looking at my own face and seeing it is so lifelike."

Surely this is a compliment that Disraeli might have envied.

In the Vienna Museum is a picture of the highest interest. It is known as "The Family of Velasquez."

Authorities seem to agree as to the authenticity of the *scene*, though there is no contemporary notice of the picture, and in spite of certain difficulties in deciding the identity of the persons represented.

This painting was lost sight of until the year 1800, when it was discovered and claimed to be a genuine Velasquez, containing his wife and family—that is, his daughter, her husband Mazo, and their children. The group in the foreground upon which most light is thrown consists of a woman seated and four children. There seems to be no doubt that the woman is

Juana, the wife of Velasquez, while the children are three of her grandsons and her granddaughter. Behind the eldest of this group of children stands a lady who places her hand affectionately on the boy's head. Still further back stands another boy, while in the deep shadow of a curtain are two figures, one of whom leans forward somewhat. The other is erect. The former is believed to be Mazo and the latter Pareja. The lady who is standing is recognised by Lefort as the daughter of Velasquez and the wife of Mazo. At the back of the room is a table containing the bust of a woman—probably Philip's first wife, Elizabeth Bourbon, whose memory Velasquez held in veneration. On the wall, just above the bust, and partly hidden by it, hangs a half-length portrait with the well-known features of Philip IV.

In the distance, raised above this room, is the painter's studio, lighted by a high, large-paned window, through which the trees of the park are visible. In this studio stands Velasquez, habited in Court suit, wearing his hat, engaged upon a large canvas which rests on the floor. He is painting the full-length portrait of a woman. The French authority whom we have so often quoted believes it to

be a picture of Queen Mariana of Austria, Philip IV.'s Consort, and he cleverly founds upon this a conjecture as to the date at which "The Family of Velasquez" was painted. The earliest period at which our artist could have met the Queen was the midsummer of 1651 on his return from Italy, as her marriage with Philip took place during his absence in 1649. The apparent ages of the children agree with the date 1651, or thereabouts, and according to this view, the boy who stands on the extreme left of the spectator as he looks at the picture is Gaspar, the eldest son of Mazo Martinez and Francisca Velasquez, his wife. In 1658 Gaspar obtained from Philip the post of Court Usher which his father had held since his marriage with Velasquez's daughter.

On the platform where the painter is engaged stands a nurse holding in check a little child just able to toddle, who is evidently bent upon making its way to grandfather's side, attracted no doubt by the colours on the canvas, and possibly anxious to try its hand at the brush!

The question of the date of this picture is important, as it throws light upon the identity of the people represented.

Justi hazards no opinion as to the lady whose portrait is being painted, referring to

her simply as "the figure in the hooped gown." The same writer raises the question as to who the artist is who stands before the canvas. Is it Velasquez himself or his son-in-law? He adds that if it be the former he "must have been an uncommonly lusty grandfather, for the alcove is furnished with no 'grandfather's chair,' nothing but two bare folding-stools."

If Lefort is even approximately correct as to the date of the picture, there is nothing very surprising in this, and when we remember that Velasquez was only in his sixty-second year when he died, we need not wonder at the absence of an easy-chair in his working-room. The labours which he went through as Aposentador during the festivities at the Isle of Pheasants only a few weeks before his fatal illness could scarcely have been performed by a man in whose studio a grandfather's chair was a necessity. Neither can we agree with this writer when he says that the portrait which has "on insufficient grounds" passed for that of the wife of Velasquez bears no likeness to the woman who is seated in the picture under discussion. Whether the portrait is called "The Sibyl," or whether it is called "Juana Pacheco," the portrait appears to us to possess

a marked resemblance to the seated woman in "The Family of Velasquez."

As to whether the picture is really by our artist or not opinions differ. Some critics are decidedly of opinion that it is. But the fact of a raised arm bearing a *mace* being introduced into the picture as an heraldic design certainly points to Mazo as the author of the work. In his *Memoranda on Fifty Pictures* Sir J. Robinson seems to think that the artist is Juan de Pareja, while Justi and Curtis incline to its being the work of Mazo. Whoever painted the picture, it enables us to realise something of what the studio of Velasquez must have been, and this by itself invests it with a special interest.

CHAPTER XVII

"TO WHAT BASE USES!"

The difficulties of travel in Spain in the seventeenth century
—Similar conditions in England—Velasquez's genius
wasted as Aposentador—Velasquez to blame for this—
The consequent loss to art—Return of Velasquez to
Madrid—His illness and death—His funeral.

AS we have already observed, the office of Aposentador to the King was not conducive to the practice of art. If this was true of the duties which fell to the lot of that official in ordinary times, it was even disastrously the case on such an occasion as the meeting of the French and Spanish monarchs on the Isle of Pheasants.

Even the necessary journey was no light undertaking. To proceed "with all possible despatch to the Bidassoa," as we wrote in a former chapter, sounds easy enough, and in these days it would be as easy as it sounds. But in the seventeenth century a journey from Madrid, over the Guadarrama Mountains and

through Old Castile, to the north coast of Spain, bore some resemblance to a pilgrimage nowadays to the Far East.

It is extremely difficult for us to realise the conditions under which our ancestors, and those of our foreign contemporaries, carried on their lives. Each village, especially if it lay in a mountainous district, was almost wholly secluded from the rest of the world. Even large towns were so much cut off from outside intercourse as to form sort of watertight compartments—the region which separated them from each other being oftendangerous and barren. This naturally tended to preserve peculiarities of race and language, making each town or countryside a world to itself. The effect upon art, too, was great. The distance which divided Seville from Madrid was quite enough to bring about the existence of two distinct schools of painting.

To Murillo, selling his devotional pictures in Seville to the shippers to the Indies to defray the expenses of his journey to the capital, the art of Madrid, where Velasquez was painting kings and princes and prime ministers, was scarcely more familiar than is the Paris *Salon* to the poor cripple who adorns our London pavements with his crayon landscapes. And

while he listened to Pedro Moya's description of his military adventures in Flanders, and of the northern artists, especially one named Van Dyck, whom he had met during the winter's truce, Murillo must have felt something of the wonder which fills the mind of an untraveller Englishman of to-day whose friend tells him of his experiences in the Chinese Interior.

We gain some notion of the almost insurmountable difficulties which must have beset travellers in Spain in the reign of Philip IV. by reading the bitter complaints of such highly-placed officials as the Foreign Envoys, who were presumably better equipped for their journeys than private travellers who had to defray expenses out of their own purse. Thus Nicolo Sagredo, the Venetian envoy, wrote: "We got nothing but a roof over the bare ground. Dining-room, kitchen, beds, chairs, and tables, attendants—all had to be brought across country, there being no rivers or canals to transport them, while the highways were in a state of utter neglect, and the land often looked for miles and miles like a wilderness."

It was a common thing for such travellers to be forced to rest for some days after reaching their destination before they were fit to transact business — so great was their exhaustion.

Giustiniani, another Venetian envoy, was fifty days, in November and December, 1659, travelling between Toulouse and Madrid, and he died two months after his arrival. During winter journeys, it frequently happened that carriages were snowed up and obliged to remain all night in the fields. One who had experienced the miseries of seventeenth-century travel in Spain, wrote thus: “Whoever wants to try his patience let him come here, he will find more proficiency made in it than in a Franciscan convent.”

But we should, in fairness, remember that England, considerably later even than the time of which we speak, was no better provided with the conveniences of travel. Macaulay, as most readers will remember, has supplied us with a graphic description of what our ancestors were forced to endure. Thus we are told that “when Prince George of Denmark visited the stately mansion of Petworth in wet weather, he was six hours going nine miles, and it was necessary that a body of sturdy hinds should be on each side of his coach in order to prop it.” And a viceroy on his way to Dublin was no better off, for he “was five hours in travelling fourteen miles, from Saint Asaph to Conway. Between Conway and Beaumaris he was

forced to walk a great part of the way, and his lady was carried in a litter. His coach was with much difficulty, and by the help of many hands, brought after him entire. In general, carriages were taken to pieces at Conway, and borne on the shoulders of stout Welsh peasants to the Menai Straits. In some parts of Kent and Sussex none but the strongest horses could, in winter, get through the bog, in which at every step they sank deep. The markets were inaccessible during several months. It is said that the fruits of the earth were sometimes suffered to rot in one place, while in another place, distant only a few miles, the supply fell far short of the demand.”¹

However much, therefore, we may scorn the want of civilisation of the Spanish Peninsula, at the time of Velasquez, we should not forget that our own ancestors were no better off. We have thus obtained a glimpse of the conditions under which Velasquez was forced to travel. But it was only when his destination was reached that his real work began. Remembering all this it is difficult to avoid a feeling of irritation at the folly which permitted his genius to be wasted, and his health and energies exhausted by the countless details of a Royal

¹ Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. i. chap. iii.

Palace and the harassing journeys of a Spanish Court.

But it would be unjust to throw the blame for this arrangement upon Philip. Palomino rightly points out the absurdity of putting the square block into a round hole, but he forgets to tell us that the absurdity was committed in consequence of the earnest desire of Velasquez himself. It was the artist who petitioned the King for the office of Aposentador, on the ground that it was suited to his genius, his tastes, and his occupation. The blunders to which every child of Adam is liable often affect his own happiness and that of his children. But the blunder which turned a genius in the full vigour of his powers into a mere over-worked courtier has robbed the artistic world of unknown treasures, the loss of which it still feels after the lapse of two centuries and a half. And the blame of this loss must fall upon Velasquez himself.¹ The office, however, as

¹ Justi remarks that Velasquez doubtless applied for the office of Aposentador with the tacit approval of the King, if not at his suggestion. In the latter case it would be unfair probably to blame the artist. The difference between the “suggestion” and the command of a Spanish king in the seventeenth century would in all likelihood be infinitesimal.

we recorded in a previous chapter, was a lucrative one, and it carried along with the salary an official residence in the Madrid Treasury.

To measure the loss which we have sustained by the occupations of Velasquez in the Isle of Pheasants, we have but to read the French accounts of the brilliant scenes which were enacted on that historic spot, and to recall the pictures in which French artists have immortalised them. The theme, as has been well remarked, was worthy of the pen of Sir Walter Scott, and it is certainly strange that Philip, who was so thoroughly appreciative of Velasquez's powers, should have let slip this golden opportunity of turning them to the most brilliant account. The twenty-one stations between Madrid and St. Sebastian must have presented a multitude of subjects for the artist's brush—scenes of departed grandeur as well as of ancient baronial halls and their noble masters; above all, the Cardinal's gorgeous palace of Alcala, to say nothing of the quaint and curious pageantry with which the royal progress was everywhere greeted. It is more than probable that our artist would have given us a few scenes at least from his well-stored memory if he had been spared long enough to undertake the work. But this was not to be.

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He arrived at home on the 7th of June, 1660. His wife's astonishment at the sight of his face was as great as her joy, for a report of his death had somehow reached Madrid, and had gained credit there. The rumour was unhappily but a forecast of the truth. Through June and July he pursued the ordinary tenor of his life, unconscious of what was possibly the case, that he carried in him the germs of a fatal disease which he had imbibed on the sea-coast. On the 31st of July, after a busy morning spent with the King, he became feverish, and he hastened to his home in the Treasury. He was soon after seized with painful spasms in heart and stomach, and the royal physicians whom Philip sent pronounced the case to be a dangerous attack of tertian fever. From the very outset they seem to have entertained no hope of a cure. He was visited by the Archbishop of Tyre, from whose hands the artist received the last Sacraments. He then conferred upon his friend, Don Gaspar de Fuensalida, full testamentary powers, and at two o'clock on the afternoon of Friday, August 6th, he breathed his last. He was in the sixty-second year of his age.

Philip evinced the most genuine sympathy and distress during the seven days that his old

friend's life was in suspense, and his grief when the end came was very great.

The body of the illustrious painter was clothed in his uniform as a Knight of Santiago, with the mantle which is worn at Chapters, the Knight's hat, sword and spurred boots, and on his breast the red badge of the Order. Thus he lay all that night in his death-chamber. The room was hung round with black, while near the bed were placed lighted candles and a crucifix. The coffin in which he was placed on the following day was ornamented with black velvet and gold nails, with a cross over it. When night came the body was carried to the parish church of St. John the Baptist, where it was received by the King's Chamberlains and placed before the altar. The funeral service was celebrated with the utmost solemnity, and at its close Don Joseph de Salinas, Knight of Calatrava, with other knights, bore the coffin to its last resting-place.

Thus ended the brilliant career of which we have given a short account—the career, unblemished by dishonour, of one who in the height of worldly success never lost the kindness of heart and simplicity of disposition which had characterised his student years. We would fain know more than we do of his

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family life. The tact and geniality which enabled him to mix with the most opposite characters—some of them notoriously difficult—lead one to suspect that pictures of domestic happiness as peaceful and as beautiful as any that came even from his brush would be revealed to us, if we were but able to raise the veil.

One fact, in itself pathetic and significant, we do know. Eight days after Velasquez's death his wife followed him to the grave!

CHAPTER XVIII

POSTHUMOUS CALUMNY—CONCLUSION

IT would be more agreeable to stop here leaving on the reader's mind the impression of sorrow, generous and ungrudging, which undoubtedly filled the hearts of most of those who had known Velasquez in life. But this compels us to add that the artist, who had shown himself free from the jealousy which poisons the life and happiness of so many, was himself the object of that odious passion in others. While he lived and possessed the full favour of the King the mouths of envy and detractors were kept closed from motive of prudence. But no sooner was he laid in the grave than rumours dishonouring to his reputation were spread about. These statements had reference solely to money matters.

That the financial affairs of the palace were in a disgraceful state of confusion was admitted on all sides, but it is difficult to see how Velasquez could be blamed for that. On the contrary, he was one of the principal sufferers

the condition of affairs. With empty coffers a palace is no better off than a cottage, and when the lack of money is so great that the servants strike work ; when the inmates have to do without stoves in the severity of a Madrid winter, and the ladies of the Court have to send out for food, and the gentlemen to go about in tattered garments ; and when we hear Velasquez himself complain at one time that no less than sixty thousand reals of his annual salary are still owing to him, it would surely be unjust to blame the Court Painter for the financial chaos.

When his affairs came to be looked into, however, it was found that Velasquez's estate was in debt to the Treasury. The business connected with his office of Court Painter and Aposentador had so filled the time since his return from Italy that he had not completed his statement of accounts when his life was unexpectedly cut short.

The arrangement of the art-treasures which he had acquired in Italy must have occupied months, perhaps years. For the purchase of these a sum of money had, of course, been advanced. Again, Velasquez had charge of another sum to defray the expenses of the journey to the Isle of Pheasants.

The account of these moneys was a work for which the artist had had no leisure. Velasquez's account had been overdrawn, and when his death occurred, his office of Palace-Marshal was in debt to the Treasury, to what to English ears sounds the appalling sum of *one million, two hundred and twenty thousand, seven hundred and seventy maravedis!*

Our alarm is somewhat mitigated when we learn that this awful sum when translated into English dwindles down to £750.

Even this debt, however, was sufficiently heavy to burden his family somewhat, and, to make matters worse, the Mayordomo Mayor put his official seal upon Velasquez's property.

An investigation followed, lasting five years, at the end of which time it was discovered that the sum due was greatly diminished by reason of the money which was still owing to the artist for wages and pictures. His son-in-law, Mazo, though he had a large family, made good half of what remained due, while the rest was considered cancelled by the deceased man's personal estate.

Then, at last, the official bar was removed. But this did not take place until close upon six years after the artist's death.

On the 10th of August, 1660, an inventory

of the goods in the room wherein Velasquez had worked was made by the new Aposentador. The document is still in the archives of the palace, and, strangely enough, it contains mention of only one picture by our artist. This is entitled, "Portrait of an English Lady." Various conjectures have been made as to the name of this lady. But the question is of less interest than it would otherwise be owing to the fact that the picture is lost.



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